THE PRINCIPALIZED TEACHER: HOW ADMINISTRATIVE CERTIFICATION
PROGRAMS IMPACT THE PROFESSIONAL LIVES OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Jeffrey J. Zweiback

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Supervisor of Dissertation:

Leslie Nabors Oláh, Adjunct Associate Professor of Education

Dean, Graduate School of Education:

Pamela L. Grossman, Dean and Professor

Dissertation Committee:

Leslie K. Nabors Oláh, Adjunct Associate Professor of Education

Janine Remillard, Professor

Barbara A. Russell, Superintendent, Perkiomen Valley School District
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DEDICATION

First and foremost, this work is dedicated to my family - Megan, Tobi, and Hadley. When I first met Megan, I sensed right away that she had the heart and selflessness to stick by me in challenging times. It was one of the things I loved - and still love - most about her to this day. However, one can never be too sure about those types of things until the real moments of challenge are upon you. These past three years have certainly been those types of moments where selflessness was needed for me to succeed. To paraphrase a quote from Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, I chose wisely. She truly has been my cup of life.

My children, Tobi and Hadley, are simply the greatest joys of my life. I could not ask for more inquisitive, patient, kind, and understanding children. Tobi has a heart as large as a grizzly bear and already shows a tremendous sense of integrity and charity. Hadley has the heart of a lion and believes that no one but herself should define the limits of her ability. In truth, I went back to earn my doctorate more for them than myself. I wanted them to see that learning every day was something that our family lived, not just spoke about at dinner time. There is always more to learn, and when you feel you know everything there is to know about something, you should have the sense to open yourself back up to new learning. Why else would someone get their doctorate at 50 years old?

Lastly, I dedicate this work to my parents, Claire E. Zweiback and A. Martin Zweiback. My parents were divorced when I was a young child. I never really knew my father that well - spending no more than random weekends and holidays with him up to and through my teenage years. Once I went off to college, he became but a passing
memory to me lasting throughout most of my adult years. Strangely, after almost 30 years of estrangement, he reentered my life after I had married, had children, and relocated to Philadelphia. I had a chance to see him once more, before he died in the spring of 2017, the same year I started my doctorate. His absence pushed me to become the person I am today. I have been fulfilled in so many ways by the road I have taken.

As for my mother, Claire, she used to tell my brother and I that everyone, “needed an ogre in their life,” and she prided herself on being ours. While I am not sure that I fully agree with such a sentiment, it always made her happy to say it. She liked to believe that all of the hardships my brother and I experienced as children were somehow either of her own doing or as a result of the injustices of life that somehow, she rarely was able to avoid. This, she believed, made her our ogre. I have never really understood why she looks back on life through such a negative lens; both my brother and I certainly do not look at life that way. True, growing up with her was never what could be described as easy, but it certainly never felt like the short end of a Grimm fairytale. There were no burning witches or eyes being gouged out. I think of life with my mom as preparing me for a challenging world. It was a life lived with someone that always got back up when she was knocked down. Getting back up does not make you an ogre; it makes you heroic. Thank you for teaching me to get back up.
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The guidance provided by my committee members, Dr. Janine Remillard and Dr. Barbara Russell, was absolutely critical in the development of this dissertation. With combined expertise in research and practice, from the moment the proposal hearing concluded, I knew I had been focused and directed in a way that would serve both the vision of what I hoped to achieve in this research and the practical guidance I would need to attain it. The term “iterative” has a funny place in the mid-career program. We learn from the first day that we will be in a constant state of adjustment and evolution in our thinking and process. The work represented here was especially iterative, and through the guidance and feedback I received from both Dr. Remillard and Dr. Russell, I was able
to focus my thinking and refine my process in a manner that allowed me to achieve my goals.

I am especially appreciative of my Cohort XV colleagues that pushed and pulled me throughout the process of learning as much about the broader context in education as I did about myself. Those lessons will go a long way in what I become after having earned this degree. I hope that I was able to at least in a small way add to your education and exploration of self throughout these past three years. It is the gift of this type of program that they bring together such a diversity of people, experiences, thoughts, and ideas. To my groupmates, e-Merge, I did not know the first day we were put together how important your lives would become to me – your pasts, presents, and futures. Chelsea, Crystal, Jerry, Nikole, I am genuinely grateful for your openness to who I am and for the guidance you have provided me towards learning more about myself and the world beyond me.

Finally, to the school communities of Springfield and Morton, I have been blessed to have been accepted by you and given the opportunity to lead and guide in such a place where the core tenants of education are valued - caring for one another is front and center to who we are and achievement is a right for all individuals. I know that I could not have arrived at this moment without the support of my colleagues at work. Thank you.
ABSTRACT

THE PRINCIPALED TEACHER: HOW ADMINISTRATIVE CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS IMPACT THE PROFESSIONAL LIVES OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Jeffrey J. Zweiback
Leslie Nabors Oláh

From pre-service teacher preparation programs to in-service professional development, millions upon millions of private and public dollars are spent in the hopes of developing a talented, highly-effective, and dedicated pool of educators focused on student success. But for all of that investment, we are seeing an ever-increasing number of educators feeling disillusioned to the point that they are leaving teaching at a higher rate than new teachers are entering the field. This study explored the questions of whether or not teachers who become certified administrators but remain in the classroom, report learning that they believe impacts their teaching and professional lives.

Drawing from school districts across Delaware County, PA, I conducted interviews and a focus group with 15 full-time classroom teachers who had earned their administrative certification within the past five years. Beyond new coursework exposure, the majority of the participants described that learning to become an administrator: 1) helped them develop empathy for their building leaders, 2) positively impacted their relationships with both colleagues and administrators, 3) made them feel more connected to their organizations and the field of teaching, and finally, 4) increased their feelings of self-efficacy as educators. These findings suggest that there may be a need for a “third space” beyond the traditional professional development and administrative certification
models being used to develop teachers across their career arcs. With attrition rates at all-time highs, the learning and impact that the “principaled” educators express in this study suggests that developing administrative competencies may provide teachers the skills that are necessary to continue to develop and thrive as educators in our modern educational system.
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Chapter 1:

INTRODUCTION

Teacher learning, and for that matter, teacher preparation, continue to be studied in the hopes of identifying the right combination of learning experiences that will increase student performance, lead to higher teacher satisfaction, and improve teacher retention (Cochran-Smith 2006; Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, & Gu, 2009; Hanushek, 2011; Holland, 1997; Menter, 2010; Spillane, 2005). While this study does not seek to answer questions in all of those potential areas of inquiry, I was interested in investigating to what degree, if any, the acquisition of administrative certification by an in-service teacher impacts teacher practice. For this inquiry, teacher practice was defined by utilizing a model of teacher competencies developed by Sykes and Wilson (2015). Within this model, teaching competencies are defined and divided into two Domains of Teaching: 1) Instructional and 2) Professional Role Responsibilities. The Instructional Domain rests at the core of teacher practice and has a series of sub-competencies that relate to Planning, Teacher Relationships, Social and Academic Life, Interactive Teaching, and Improvement (Sykes & Wilson, 2015). The second Domain of teacher practice, Professional Role Responsibilities, is a set of competencies that serve to fulfill the broader responsibilities of teachers as professionals beyond the immediate student-centered instructional classroom experience (Sykes & Wilson, 2015). A summary of the Domains of Teaching framework can be found in Appendix A.

As someone who taught for six years after obtaining an administrative certification, what I learned during that program of study, while focused on future career goals, personal development, and increased compensation, did something more; it helped
me become a “better,” more competent educator. Not only did obtaining an administrative certificate through administrative coursework improve my classroom-based skills, but I also felt more prepared to support the district’s mission and my building administrators’ efforts to serve that mission. I became equipped to problem-solve issues related to the school beyond my classroom and teaching practice. This led to confidence in my voice and in my craft that I had not had before the administrative training. As a classroom teacher, for example, I became comfortable speaking with my curriculum director about the impact of different literature choices in the classroom or the impact of various instructional choices made during lesson planning and delivery. The skills that I developed during my administrative certification coursework helped me realize that I had a lot more to learn as a teacher. This led me to question the nearly 10 years of training I had received up to that point in my teacher preparation program and the on-going professional development provided by the district. It appeared to me that both had fallen short of fully developing the necessary competencies I needed to be an effective teacher for my students.

With teacher preparation programs serving as the entry point into the classroom for a vast majority of teachers, this is where I began my review of the literature to attempt to define a foundational, or shared, set of expected competencies or skills that novice teachers have as they enter public schools and embark on their early years of classroom teaching. An analysis of national standards and quality programs served to establish what skills teachers are meant to possess at the beginning of their careers (Grossman, Compton, Igra, Ronfeldt, Shahan, & Williamson, 2009; Koedel, Parsons, Podgursky, & Ehlert, 2015). Understanding what skills are presumed to be present upon career entry as
an educator helped to identify those competencies that may be impacted by the administrative certification programs (Hollins, 2011; Monk, 2015). Those competencies that are presumed to exist in novice teachers at career start served as the baseline from which I could explore the growth or impact new learning has had on in-service teachers.

I found that the vast amount of literature in the area of teacher preparation programs focuses on the conceptual frameworks through which they operate and make decisions, the philosophical choices that are made in terms of content and experiences students share, and finally, the measurement of outcomes attributed to specific program experiences including the subsequent impact those programs have on student achievement (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2009; Kumashiro, 2015; Menter, 2010; Mitchel & Aldeman, 2017). While none of these areas spoke directly to my interest in teachers with administrative certification, I was hoping to synthesize from this literature an understanding of what teacher preparation programs believe is their primary function and what competencies they believe novice teachers should possess upon entering the teaching field. Essentially, by engaging in the analysis and review of the teacher preparation literature, this helped to establish the basic/minimum competencies expected by the education field against which I could later compare the impact, if any, of new learning provided through in-service professional development.

Building off the knowledge gained from analyzing teacher preparation programs, a review of the literature on in-service teacher professional development identified what skills and competencies were impacted by this type of training and what training experiences might be most effective in developing teacher competencies. An analysis of in-service teacher professional development programs helped to identify how in-service
training could impact teacher competency. Teacher professional development research tends to focus on the underlying question of whether targeting subject-matter content knowledge, teaching pedagogy, or the development of technology aptitudes has the most significant impact on improving teacher competencies and student outcomes (Borko, Jacobs, & Koellner, 2010; Drake, Spillane, & Hufferd-Ackles, 2001; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Gersten, Dimino, Jayanthi, Kim, & Santoro, 2010; Guskey, 2002).

**Statement of Purpose**

Despite all of the research in the area of teacher preparation and in-service teacher professional development, there remains a debate as to what indeed is the best approach for improving teaching competency and student outcomes. Drawing upon my own 25 years of experience in education and in looking at the literature in the fields of teacher preparation programs and in-service teacher professional development, I believe that we have missed the mark on consistently developing highly competent and capable classroom teachers. Over a decade ago, Cochran-Smith (2006) succinctly summarized the highly complex issue of teacher preparation and its effectiveness in developing teacher competencies, "…what teacher preparation has to do with being a well-qualified and competent teacher is a highly contested issue, one that is apparently open to endless debates about what the evidence shows, what the existing data means, and what the implications are for public policy” (p. 46). Although she has since expanded on the research in the area of teacher preparation and teaching competency, based on the sheer volume of research that exists and continues to be produced, there clearly remains considerable debate as to how to effectively measure those competencies and precisely
what facets of teacher pre-service and in-service training yield the most impact on them (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2014). It is squarely in this question of the efficacy of both preparation and on-going learning for educators that I sought to identify what other experiences could bolster educator competency across the life of their careers. One need only look at the mass exodus of teachers leaving the profession today to conclude that we need to help teachers better handle the ever-evolving demands of the profession (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

As stated previously, I believe there is a “third space” of teacher training that could serve to equip our teachers for the demands and challenges of 21st-Century education. Beyond teacher preparation programs and traditional professional development training that focus on content knowledge, instructional pedagogy, or developing skills in utilizing instructional technology; providing teachers with an opportunity to develop administrative competencies through school administration coursework may provide teachers with benefits that have previously been under-identified. This “third space” of teacher training may provide a potential opportunity for evolving the field of teacher preparation, in-service training, and on-going career development.

Research Questions

Influenced by the Sykes and Wilson (2015) teacher competency framework, this qualitative research study seeks to answer two fundamental questions:

- What do teachers who have administrative certification describe learning from their administrative certification programs?
- How do they report this learning impacting their teaching and professional lives?
Background and Context

The goals of pre-service teacher education tend to follow a consistent pattern of developing a basic understanding of content-specific knowledge and instructional pedagogy (Menter et al. 2010). As teachers progress through their careers and the content specialization and pedagogical knowledge development opportunities begin to ebb, one avenue available to teachers to advance their careers and develop their practice is to obtain administrative certification. Pursuing an administrative certificate generally represents both a time-consuming commitment for educators outside of their daily professional lives and a financial burden that is born mostly by the educator. Traditional district-level professional development or tuition reimbursement programs for college courses generally do not provide for the opportunity to develop deeper or broader knowledge and skills. Therefore, what a veteran educator encounters is that districts continue the same type of professional development activities that they have always undertaken. There tends to be little to no differentiation or recognition that educators beyond the early stages of their careers, who have generally mastered much of subject content and demonstrated skillful instructional pedagogy, have little in the way of true professional development that substantively expands their teaching competency.

Schools in Pennsylvania spend millions of dollars each year on professional development and tuition reimbursement for teachers (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). My school district allocates nearly a quarter of a million dollars each year for teacher in-service training and tuition reimbursement (PDE Form 2028 Filing Springfield School District, 2016). The monies allocated for this are meant to provide
teachers with additional training and professional development that both increases their competency as educators and can be shown to positively impact the performance of students in their classrooms. Paying for a teacher to develop their skills means it is fair to ask, “How will we know when (and if) teachers know and can do what they ought to know and be able to do?” (Cochran-Smith, 2006, p.13).

Historically speaking, administrative certification programs have been traditionally viewed as a pathway for educators to leave the classroom. This may be one of the reasons why districts have been reluctant to provide financial support in either tuition reimbursement or in school funded professional learning opportunities in administration. Using my district as an example, we have nine building-level administrators who supervise approximately 315 staff members – a ratio of approximately 1:35. Therefore, with the limited number of administrative openings in our district, providing administrative training during professional development days or granting access to tuition reimbursement (a collectively bargained benefit that covers a percentage of the cost of typical graduate-level coursework) for an administrative course appears on the surface to counter the district’s financial interests because educators with new administrative certification would have to leave the district to secure an administrative position. From a local perspective, our Board views paying teachers to develop skills that traditionally have been viewed as being for administrative roles only as “throwing good money after bad,” essentially arguing that using taxpayer funds to train teachers in skills that have a high likelihood of resulting in them leaving the district is a bad investment. However, what if those administrative competencies could make them better teachers, thus positively impacting the students in their classrooms?
During a recent review of 37 collective bargaining agreements written for local teacher associations across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I found that school districts typically reimbursed teachers between 55% and 85% of the cost of each graduate-level course taken for on-going teacher development and training. Only three districts had collective bargaining agreements that did not have language limiting the application of those funds to specific course programming options. Most agreements limited the tuition reimbursement to coursework taken within the current placement or position to which the teacher is assigned. During a pilot study that I conducted in the Spring of 2017, I contacted 53 assistant superintendents and other district academic directors across Pennsylvania and asked them if they had ever provided any professional development to their staff that could be considered in any capacity as administrator training, such as learning to write curriculum, learning supervision techniques, or analyzing teaching. Only two districts stated that they had ever conducted this type of professional development, and both were limited to the area of writing curriculum.

The implications of this research could contribute not only to our knowledge about the development of teaching competencies, which is the primary focus but also inform policies around district spending and long-term financial investments in staff development. Finding what impacts student learning and acknowledging the constraints of resources is part of every discussion at local, state and federal levels. In wanting to explore a means of providing on-going training and support to teachers in a manner that benefits children locally, school districts attempt to utilize some form of a cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) as part of the decision-making process, seeing both what works for students and how much it costs the taxpayers to provide. According to Levin
and Belfield (2014), “CEA in education is used to compare alternative interventions with similar educational goals such as gains in reading or math achievement or completion of courses or other educational outcomes” (p.402). Notably, over the past decade and a half, due to a swing towards fiscal austerity and the rising cost of education in general, considerable energy has been spent in developing localized models that can be utilized to identify the cost-effectiveness of many aspects of district interventions and programming (Levin & Belfield, 2014). Thus, districts have become better equipped to measure the impact of training on their staff and how that might translate to student performance. If a district is going to take on the cost of further developing teachers’ knowledge and skills, the district needs to be able to determine the added value of that expenditure. This research will explore one non-traditional approach for further supporting educator development: administrative certification.

While not explicitly stated in the teacher attrition literature, it seems a reasonable hypothesis that with the high number of teachers leaving the profession within the first five years of their career, something may be missing in the training and preparation of teachers that is needed to create the necessary conditions for them to feel connected to their organizations and equipped for the challenges of the field. The desire to remain committed to the profession appears to have some origins in the training, preparation, and on-going development of teachers. Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2016) reference that compared to other industrialized nations, the United States has “dramatically [lower] levels of training,” which may account for some of the attrition (p.53). Additionally, they note that teachers have uneven access to on-the-job mentoring or professional learning to help improve their skills.
Financial implications aside, if researchers and policymakers can identify learning activities that improve teaching competency, educators may feel better equipped to handle the variety of daily challenges, and teachers may remain in the field for a significantly longer period of time. For those individuals who already possess an administrative certification, I believe we are overlooking the benefits that these individuals bring to the overall educational program given their specialized training and experience. This research serves as a first step in bridging the gap between the current approach to teacher development and potentially better ways to prepare them for the demands of the field.

**Rationale and Significance**

I am hopeful that the results of this study can find a place in conversations about how to improve teacher practice and career satisfaction. It seems clear that if we continue to focus only on traditional approaches to professional development and rely on established teacher preparation paradigms, we cannot expect much in the way of change regarding the negative perception associated with entering into, and subsequently remaining in, teaching as a career. According to Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2016), between 2009 and 2014, “teacher enrollments in higher education programs dropped from 691,000 to 451,000, a 35% reduction. This amounts to a decrease of almost 240,000 professionals on their way to the classroom in the year 2014, as compared to 2009” (p. 3).

Additionally, these researchers report that there are high levels of attrition, with nearly 8% of the teaching workforce leaving every year, the majority before retirement age. The status quo cannot continue if we want to improve student learning, and it is
incumbent upon teacher and administrator practitioners to look outside of the current system to find solutions to problems of teacher retention. Although the research in the area of teacher turnover and retention does not explicitly link attrition to teacher preparation and lack of professional development opportunities, it seems reasonable to suggest that these could contribute to some of the negative feelings teachers offer as to why they choose to leave the profession (Ingersoll, 2002).

As I looked further into the questions surrounding the relationship of administrative certification to teaching competency, I was struck by how little research there is in this area. I was able to find only two studies that examined teachers who entered into administrative certification programs but were not practicing administrators (Kossack, 2006; Schutte, 2003). The studies focused on the barriers to obtaining a position in administration, but some of the research questions did investigate why participants had enrolled in administrator certification programs and whether they were still classroom teachers five years after having earned their administrative certification.

One interesting finding was that while many teachers have aspirations of leadership, Schutte (2003) showed that among 195 respondents, approximately 36% of teachers who had obtained administrative certification did not apply for a single administrative position during the five years after they had attained the certification (p. 73). In a second study with 294 respondents, Kossack (2006) found that 7% of teachers who applied for administrative certification did so specifically for a salary increase alone, which, in many locales can be obtained through lane-change salary increases without actually achieving promotion to an administrative position. Approximately 25% of teachers who obtained the administrative certification had no interest in becoming
administrators (p.61). While this study will not delve directly into the motivations of
teachers to obtain administrative certification and remain in the classroom, these findings
demonstrate that there is a population for whom this topic is relevant.

Studying the impact of obtaining administrative certification on the practice of in-
service teachers is an area of inquiry that will require clear distillation of themes across a
focused array of research literature. A review of the literature on teacher preparation and
professional development needs to be synthesized to ground this study with a conceptual
framework. Trying to ascertain whether, and how, in-service teachers benefit from
having earned administrative certification could inform the development of a new
paradigm for approaching teacher preparation and thinking about district-led professional
development. The teacher education literature, for both teacher preparation programs and
in-service professional development, does not directly address this line of inquiry;
however, the findings from this study may inform how we view current practice on the
development of teaching competency across a teacher’s career span.
Chapter 2:

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

While there is considerable literature on teaching competency and how traditional training and preparation experiences can increase those competencies, there is a lacuna in the research when it comes to identifying how teaching and administrative competencies can be combined to improve teachers’ practice. As mentioned previously, research on the connections between administrative certification and teaching practice appears to be very scarce and more than a decade old. Additionally, the few studies that exist refer more to the reasons that teachers do not become administrators rather than focusing on the impact of such training on their teaching practice (Kossack, 2006; Schutte, 2003).

With the paucity of literature in the area of administrative skill development and its impact on teaching practice, I focus primarily on the baseline competencies established in teacher preparation programs and the subsequent development of those competencies through in-service professional development. However, while these two areas of research may serve to ground my investigation in a conceptual framework, the majority of this qualitative study will rest in what appears to be a previously undefined area of analysis. The synthesis of the existing research on teacher preparation and in-service professional development with the addition of the findings from this study, I believe, has the potential to lay the framework for a new area of teacher research and practice. In Figure 1, I attempt to represent my own developmental theory that draws upon the research on teacher preparation and in-service professional development and hypotheses about what may emerge from this investigation into the impact of training to
become an administrator and its impact on teaching competency. A revised version of this model based on the findings from this study will be presented in Chapter 5.

**Figure 1 Proposed Developmental Model of Teacher Proficiency**

Figure 1 represents four hypothesized opportunities for growth in teacher development across a career span. The experiences of teachers highlighted above posit an increase in teaching competency as a result of traditional professional development activities and experience combined with learning administrative competencies gained through formal administrative preparation programs, coaching opportunities, or apprenticeships. Administrative competencies mean many different things and are defined differently depending upon the educational contexts and the literature; however, for the purpose here, some examples of administrative competencies would be in the area of instructional leadership, curriculum development, resource acquisition and management, and community planning and collaboration. As opposed to traditional in-service professional development, many of the administrative competencies mentioned above are
typically gained only through formal administrative preparation programs, coaching
opportunities, and apprenticeships/practicums. While not bound by specific time periods,
the framework posits that from Novice teacher to Realized teacher, educators will
encounter a variety of personal and professional experiences that will expand their
competencies.

The conceptual framework for this study begins with an exploration of the
literature on teaching competencies and pre-service preparation. Sykes and Wilson
(2015) synthesized a vast body of research on teaching competencies, providing a
structural framework that identifies a set of nine global teaching sub-domains with 34
discrete competencies that teachers should be able to engage in to support students and
the organizations in which they work (see Appendix A for a table of the competencies).
As this is the most recent comprehensive review of research on teaching competencies, I
will take this synthesis as indicative of where the research on this topic currently stands.

In addition to the representation of teaching competency through Sykes and
Wilson (2015), I offer a brief review of the national teacher preparation standards to
supplement this framework and to add language describing the competencies that may be
impacted as a result of the learning attributed to administrative preparation. It is
important to note that I am not seeking to review the entire body of literature on teaching
competency or teaching quality, but rather to delineate the areas of teaching practice that
could be impacted by administrative training.

In brief, Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) Domains of Teaching touches on the major
facets of a teacher’s professional practice. The Instructional Domain, as they describe it,
involves the “central work of teaching” which focuses on the “three interrelated aspects
of planning: creating plans, enacting plans, and studying and revising plans and actions for purposes of improvement” (Sykes & Wilson, 2015, p. 19). This domain’s primary focus is on the teacher’s reflective practice and how they both plan and subsequently deliver high quality instruction: “Teachers plan and continuously revise plans,” through formal and informal assessments which they use to “evaluate instructional outcomes and to provide input for longer term efforts to systematically improve instruction” (Sykes & Wilson, 2015, p. 19). The Professional Responsibilities Domain, “includes the legal and ethical commitments that attach to the role of teachers and their fiduciary responsibility to students, together with the work teachers do with others—family members, other teachers, administrators, service providers—in support of students’ learning and development” (Sykes & Wilson, 2015, p. 19).

Ultimately, although there are 34 discrete competencies within the whole of the Sykes and Wilson (2015) two global Domains of Teaching, I will highlight the 10 specific competencies that I hypothesize would be most impacted by the additional learning associated with administrator training. These are:

- Instructional Domain: Preparing and planning for high-quality instruction:
  - Promoting community participation as opportunity to explore core values
  - Setting long- and short-range learning goals and objectives
  - Selecting and adapting resources for use in instruction

- Instructional Domain: Establishing and maintaining the social and academic culture
  - Managing the physical and material environment
  - Managing instructional groupings
- Instructional Domain: Engaging in instructional improvement
  - Engaging in deliberate practice
- Professional Role Responsibilities Domain: Collaborating with other professionals
  - Exercising leadership, both formally and informally
- Professional Role Responsibilities Domain: Working with families and communities
  - Using family- and community-related information as a resource for learning
- Professional Role Responsibilities Domain: Fulfilling ethical responsibilities
  - Responding to ethical dilemmas with sound reasoning and actions
- Professional Role Responsibilities: Meeting legal responsibilities
  - Complying with all relevant laws and regulations

Beyond these competencies that may be impacted by administrative certification, I reviewed teacher professional development literature to examine current in-service teacher professional learning models. This research helps describe current models and practices within the education field that are intended to support on-going teacher learning once educators enter the profession. This body of literature is critical to this study because it illustrates the current practices of developing teacher competency beyond baseline preparation, and it provides some indication as to the effectiveness of those practices on student outcomes. While this study does not focus on student outcomes, the most current literature on teacher professional development appears to be fundamentally preoccupied with this concept (Desimone, Smith, & Phillips, 2013; Garet, Porter,
Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Gersten, Dimino, Jayanti, Kim, & Santoro, 2010; Hill, Beisiegel, & Jacob, 2013; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002). Thus, it is essential to include some of the most robust findings from this research in this review. The remainder of this chapter provides a review of literature that focuses on the development of teaching competencies both during teacher preparation and while practicing in-service.

**Teacher Preparation and Beginning Competencies**

According to Monk (2015), “teacher education has been garnering a lot of attention in recent years, which reflects its importance and the need to make progress” (p. 224). Identifying the core expectations of novice teacher candidates in accredited teacher preparation programs serves as an excellent point of entry in identifying what competencies teachers are recommended to possess to be considered “ready to teach.” “Readiness” is essentially a term describing baseline skills that are deemed to exist upon completion of a teacher preparation program and, in some cases, is equated with achieving a minimum passing score on a teacher certification exam, such as the Praxis®. Reviewing the literature on teacher preparation and the competencies that educators are expected to have when entering the profession helps to identify potential shifts in knowledge and skills that teachers with administrative certification may gain as a result of having taken part in these types of programs. Simply put, knowing what teachers know before they enter the profession will allow there to be some exploration of what has changed as a result of new learning.

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) is the predominant teacher accreditation authority in the U.S. with approximately 36 state and
national organizations committed to meeting their five core standards (Navigation. (n.d.). Retrieved November 09, 2017, from http://caepnet.org/). For the purposes of this study, the focus is primarily on Standard #1, “Content and Pedagogical Knowledge.” This standard helps to establish the fundamental expectations that teachers are expected to meet upon entering the profession (see Appendix B for complete text related to CAEP Standard #1). Standard #1 states that teachers, defined as those individuals who graduate from a CAEP certified program, are expected to able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the learner and learning, instructional practice, and professional responsibility
- Use research to understand the profession and the practice of teaching
- Apply content and pedagogy in practice which can be reflected in outcome assessments
- Demonstrate skills and commitment in developing skills related to vigorous college and career standards
- Model and apply technology standards

The establishment of teacher standards of practice, as defined by institutional expectations via CAEP, helps to define the competencies that teachers are expected to obtain before becoming certified and practicing teachers. In addition to the standards of accrediting organizations, teacher training programs also use the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium’s (InTASC) 10 Core Teaching Standards, created by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), to add to the foundational set of experiences and competencies that all new teachers are to have undertaken upon entering the profession (see Appendix C for details on the 10 InTASC Standards). CAEP
specifically references the InTASC standards in Standard 1, Content and Pedagogical Knowledge.

The 10 InTASC standards, or competencies, are organized into four larger domains, covering many of the same expectations as the CAEP standards: The Learner and Learning, Content Knowledge, Instructional Practice, and Professional Responsibility. A distinguishing feature of the InTASC standards is that they also specify expectations for teacher growth beyond baseline skills, or “progressions.” According to the CCSSO, “progressions describe the increasing complexity and sophistication of teaching practice for each core standard across three developmental levels” (InTASC, CCSSO, 2013, p.9). The progressions serve as both benchmarks and guides as to what skills should be developed in the hope that as teachers move from novice, entry-level professionals; they develop their expertise to a point where they commonly: differentiate in their classrooms, develop leaners’ higher-order thinking skills, promote and facilitate cross-disciplinary approaches, and collaborate seamlessly with colleagues, leaders, families, and community organizations. CCSSO offers rubrics to establish Level 1 expectations upon entry into the profession, but then allows for progression along a continuum of increasing competencies as a result of more experience, added practice, and new learning.

Podolsky and Kini’s (2016) synthesis of 30 studies related to the effect of teaching experience on student achievement reports that, “Teaching experience is positively associated with student achievement gains throughout a teacher’s career. The gains from experience are highest in teachers’ initial years, but continue for teachers in the second and often third decades of their careers” (p.18). Their analysis of the 30
studies concludes that the greatest level of growth in teacher effectiveness occurs in the first seven years of teaching (Podolsky & Kini, 2016). According to Podolsky and Kini (2016), “teacher effectiveness is often measured by looking at student test score gains ...[and] are generally explained in terms of standard deviations of student test scores” (p. 10). Because my research focuses on the experiences of in-service teachers who are not new to the profession, the idea that skills and competencies increase as a result of experience, practice, and new learning, albeit measured through the lens of increased student achievement, needs to be considered as I explore potential changes in teacher learning and/or practice coming potentially as a result of administrative training.

It is essential to recognize that while the InTASC standards and the Sykes and Wilson Domains of Teaching do not wholly overlap, there are some very close similarities between what novice teachers are expected to have learned in teacher preparation and what competencies they must demonstrate in the field. Some of the clearest areas of overlap fall between the InTASC Standards 1-9 and the Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) Instructional Domain. Additionally, InTASC Standard 10, “Leadership and Collaboration” has a clear overlap with Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) Professional Role Responsibilities Domain. Some examples of clear overlaps that pertain specifically to this research are in the areas of:

- InTASC Standard #3 – Learning Environments and Sykes and Wilson (2015) Instructional Domain: Establishing and maintaining the social and academic culture
• InTASC Standard #9 – Professional and Ethical Practice and Sykes and Wilson (2015) Professional Role Domain: Collaborating with other professionals

• InTASC Standard #10 – Leadership and Collaboration and Sykes and Wilson (2015) Professional Role Domain: Exercising leadership both formally, and informally & Collaborating with other professionals

A more extended summary of the similarities between the two frameworks is presented in its entirety in Appendix D: A Mapping of 10 InTASC Core Teaching Standards onto the Sykes and Wilson Domains of Teaching. These two frameworks together informed my data collection and analysis.

Beyond the content of what is taught in teacher preparation programs, how teachers are prepared is also important to consider as I explore the potential impact of subsequent learning on teaching competency. It is important to note that the research on effective teacher preparation programs has a wide variety of perspectives on the features that make a program effective (Levine, 2006; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). As I will share later in this review, student outcomes appear to be the most common way that researchers measure the success of both teacher preparation programs and the effectiveness of on-going in-service teacher professional development. Ball and Forzani (2009) sought to analyze the state of teacher preparation education and concluded that “student learning [depends] on substantial, large scale changes in how we prepare and support teachers,” (p.497), which sits squarely as the impetus for this study.

Over a decade ago, Levine (2006) warned that “Qualitatively, teacher skills and knowledge have to be raised if we are to substantially increase students’ achievement” (p. 11). Ball and Forzani (2009) further stated that, while efforts to improve teacher quality
and influence student learning have grown, “...most initiatives have focused on teacher
recruitment and retention and on developing new pathways to teaching. [We] argue that
such initiatives are insufficient without fundamental renovations to the curriculum of
professional education teachers” (p.497).

Some existing models of teacher preparation have grown from the desire to
provide “multiple opportunities to practice the work [of teaching] and fine tune skills”
(Ball & Forzani, 2009, p. 498). However, these innovative programs remain relatively
small in scale, and the research on them is scarce. Student teacher practicums attempt to
provide this in vivo experience for learning the skills of effective teaching, but this idea
hasn’t greatly expanded to in-service opportunities to improve teacher practice after
teachers have had the benefit of some professional experience. There are systems of
mentoring and coaching in place in a number of school systems; however, in thinking
about the manner in which the medical model develops practitioners through residencies
or even the apprenticeship models of many trades, the teaching profession continues to
rely on a model where completion of predominantly classroom preparation with only a
small percentage of time spent actually engaging in the practice of instruction with
students continue to be the norm.

Ball and Forzani (2009) argue that beyond the structure of a preparation program
the “curriculum of professional training should be the first object of teachers’ attention
and that this curriculum must focus squarely on the quality of instructional practice” (p.
498). However, movement towards a professional training model as a focus for teachers
has been notably slow where the vast majority of programs are “centered on domains of
professional knowledge,” which is content focused knowledge rather than “knowledge in
practice” (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996, p.503). It is argued that “knowledge in practice” is a more congruent approach to the task of teaching in that it focuses on the balance of knowledge, judgement, reasoning and the actions between all of these to achieve specific instructional goals (p.503).

Research indicates that there is an apparent disconnect between the current state of teacher preparation and the need to prepare a robust and effective teaching force. Grossman et al. (2009) offer a framework that draws on three concepts for what they describe as the “pedagogies of practice” for professional education: representation, decomposition, and approximation (p. 1). These concepts are relevant to this study because they appear consistently across most teacher preparation programs and administrative certification programs. The Grossman et al. (2009) framework for learning describes how pre-service teachers develop their baseline competencies through a series of structured learning experiences.

To summarize the research briefly, Grossman et al. (2009), define representation as, “the visibility of certain facets of practice” (p. 2066), or literally visible attributes and actions that can be viewed by pre-service teachers and that can be learned merely by viewing the practice in action. An example of this could be a preservice teacher watching a video of a classroom teacher in which aspects of teaching practice are represented to the student (e.g., a teacher’s use of technology to demonstrate a concept in class, or how a teacher moves around a class to assist with classroom management). Learning occurs in this setting by experiencing, for the most part, the visual and auditory signals relayed by the teacher of practice to the novice or student teacher.
The second area, decomposition, is a systematic approach to, “...breaking down complex practice into its constituent parts for the purposes of teaching and learning” (Grossman et al., 2009, p. 2069). This would be exemplified by pre-service teachers analyzing particular strategies or methods used by a teacher. Decomposition serves to break down and analyze whole components of an educator’s craft, such as classroom management strategies or pedagogical choices around a particular subject matter to be taught. Students must identify the key individual attributes of a particular practice and build meaning from these parts. Once the analysis of content and pedagogy is done, the student can, presumably, begin to replicate the actions taken by the modeling teacher. Grossman et al., (2009) share common pedagogical practices such as role plays, case studies, and videos in teacher preparation that are utilized in order to accomplish decomposition.

Finally, approximation is based on a theory of continually and systematically approximating the total act of teaching (Grossman et al., 2009). This means that pre-service teachers begin to learn about small aspects of teaching practice through a series of steps or “approximations” as the student gets closer to the actual process of teaching a whole class. Pre-service teacher learning increases in complexity from representation and decomposition and moves into a complex integration of acquired skills and learning into approximations of practice. The result of this transition is a further expansion of teaching competencies by giving opportunities for pre-service teachers to practice as teachers. Similar to a student teaching internship, where pre-service teachers are given small, measured opportunities to engage in the act of teaching, these approximations of the actual task of teaching are designed to build on top of the knowledge gained from
other processes of learning, representation, and decomposition. Subsequently, as teaching competency is developed along the pathway of the standards outlined in InTASC and CAEP, the pre-service teacher is released to take on more responsibility as an educator and move closer to in-service practice.

Through each phase of student learning prior to entering the teaching profession, the novice teacher experiences and analyzes, and thus develops, the competencies necessary to enter practice as a certified classroom teacher. Although meeting the standards outlined by CCSSO in InTASC and CAEP could be considered the achievement of the minimal level of skill expected to enter the field of education, it is precisely at this point of entry where teachers transition to in-service learning experiences, which are meant to focus on an expansion and development of teaching competency.

**Teacher Professional Development (TPD)**

Becoming a novice teacher entails transitioning from the world of preparation for teaching to one of professional practice as a teacher. Part of a practicing teacher’s responsibility is continued learning and development of competency. As teachers move from pre-service to in-service, professional development and on-going teacher training must build off of the foundation that early teacher preparation programs have provided for them. Nearly every state teacher licensing board in the United States (except for California, Missouri, New Jersey, and Wisconsin) requires teachers to pursue on-going professional development to maintain and recertify their teaching certification throughout their careers (Sawchuk, 2017, para 20, 27). This fact alone demonstrates the clear importance of in-service learning as integral to the career span of a classroom teacher, as
it is generally required to maintain one’s certification and standing in the profession. The costs associated with the provision of such on-going education speak to the need to identify effective content and learning experiences for teachers to develop their competencies as educators and realize a return on the investment made to provide such training. I found that most literature defined the concept of return on investment in terms of student achievement as an outcome (Garet et al., 2008; Harris & Sass, 2011; Jacob & Lefgren, 2004).

As I look to synthesize the literature on teacher professional development (TPD), I wanted to offer a working definition of TPD. There are several operational definitions for teacher professional development, a lengthy one of which is offered by the federal government in Title IX Section 901.34 (see Appendix E for the entirety of the Title IX Section 901.34). In short, Title IX Section 901.34 focuses mainly on TPD activities that relate to increasing content knowledge, expanding pedagogical skills, improving classroom management and integrating technology in the classroom. Beyond those, it also focuses on teacher practice that supports high-quality instruction aligned with state-standards and increased student achievement. This link of TPD to student achievement is something that permeates much of the discussion in the literature on this topic.

Additionally, one of the more concise definitions I came across in the research came from the *PA Professional Development System Framework for Early Care and Education* which states that,

Professional development is facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional, collaborative and designed to support the acquisition of professional
knowledge, skills, ethics/values, and dispositions as well as the application of this knowledge in practice to benefit all children and families. (2013, p. 6)

The focus here on transactional and collaborative learning links nicely with the descriptions of both decomposition and approximation from Grossman et al. (2009).

There are over 200,000 articles, books, and journal references published since 1990 in the area of in-service teacher professional development. The most commonly cited articles mostly described the benefits associated with a particular type of teacher-training delivery model, the focus of the training (e.g., content or pedagogical), and/or the impact of either the content or the delivery model on student performance or teacher competency (Borko & Putnam, 1995; Garet et al., 2008; Boyd et al., 2009; Desimone, Smith, & Phillips 2013; Hill, Beisiegel, & Jacob 2013).

On the surface, the recognition that TPD may have an impact on teaching competency proved promising during an initial review of the literature, but further investigation revealed that the quality of professional development programs was generally measured using student achievement data and generally does not measure teaching competency as an outcome. It is important to note that while an increase in teaching competency may occur as a result of professional development experiences, the preponderance of the current research tends to focus on its impact on student achievement.

The National Center for Educational Statistics (2014) found that Teacher Content Area Development, Classroom Management Strategies, Use of Computers / Technology in the Classroom, and Reading Strategies were the five most common areas of on-going training for teachers. These areas of professional development, according to NCES,
represent 98.6% of the listed “most common” topics presented for in-service teacher professional development. It is difficult to conclude why TPD takes on such a narrow focus given the expansion of research and practice related to social emotional learning, growth mindset, grit factor, and project-based learning. The narrow focus of topics that professional development tends to explore may perhaps be a result of the 2004 Presidential Teaching Commission’s report, which concluded that “ongoing and targeted professional development” was needed in U.S. schools to help teachers meet the challenges provided by the new standards and the current lack of student achievement associated with these new standards (p. 11). But while the commission’s report may have laid the groundwork for developing professional development activities that target student achievement, it doesn’t answer the question as to how we landed on such narrow topics for expanding teacher competency and the decision to measure the success of them through student outcomes (although some believe that using standardized outcome measures allows for greater discretion of approaches because it matters less how the outcome is achieved – just that it is). The Sykes and Wilson (2015) synthesis intends to address some of the disconnects in our current approaches to TPD and offer new insights into what should be developed through TPD. Specifically, they explain that their report, ...is intended to inform programs of teacher preparation and professional development. The focus is on practices...which is intended to signal attention to what effective teachers learn how to do in the course of teaching, based on knowledge used in practice. (p. 4)

Sykes and Wilson (2015) add to this discussion by allowing that while student outcomes are certainly one measure for determining effective teacher practice, other aspects of
teaching practice should be included as well, such as the ability to meet ethical responsibilities and increase student sense of efficacy.

Broadening the conversation on the importance of TPD beyond student outcomes is vital given the fact that there is a body of research that has shown the impact of TPD on student learning to be small, sometimes nominal, despite considerable investment of time and money (Garet et al., 2008; Harris & Sass, 201; Jacob & Lefgren, 2004). Garet et al. (2010), for example, found that that a “professional development program for middle school math teachers designed to improve the teaching of rational numbers...did not yield any statistically significant improvement in student achievement” (p. 800). Additionally, Harris and Sass (2011) found that they could not establish a “consistent relationship between formal professional development training and teacher productivity [student achievement]” (p.798). They went on to state that “in-service professional development has little or no effect on the ability of teachers to improve student achievement, with the exception of middle school math” (Harris & Sass, 2011, p.811). Moreover, Jacob and Lefgren (2004), found in their study of the Chicago Public Schools that although there was a substantial level of expenditure on professional development in “failing” schools, the allocation of the resources and training had “no discernible effect on student achievement.” (p. 77). Both Harris and Sass (2011) and Jacob and Lefgren (2004) found that the current models of professional development training experiences targeting professional skill development in content and/or pedagogy, ranging in duration of approximately 35 to 55 hours in length per school year, typically failed to show statistically significant gains in student achievement.
Despite the above-cited research that concludes that the impact of TPD on student achievement is nominal at best, there are a greater number of studies that conclude the opposite and recognize the ability of TPD to change teacher practice for the better and suggest that there is a benefit for student learning outcomes. Borko (2004) maps “…the terrain of research on teachers’ professional development” and argues that “professional development can lead to improvements in instructional practices and student learning” (p. 3). More recently, Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) conducted a synthesis of 35 studies that noted positive links in a majority of the studies between teacher learning and student achievement. Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) sought to “…define features of effective PD… that emerged from our extensive search of the literature over the last three decades.” (p. v). The seven elements that they identified in successful professional development programming were that PD should:

- Be content focused
- Incorporate active learning strategies
- Engage teachers in collaboration
- Use models and/or modeling
- Provide coaching and expert support
- Include time for feedback and reflection
- Be sustained for a duration of time

Likewise, Hargreaves and Fullan’s (2015) research explains that a “collaborative culture” exists when traits similar to what Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) outlined above are included in a district’s professional development program. The results of such
a program develop “collective professional capital” which in turn leads to more productive, widespread improvement in the organization as a whole (p. 23).

Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, and Birman (2002) shared similar insights into the benefits of professional development in mathematics and science when they concluded that “professional development focused on specific teaching practices increased teachers’ use of those practices in the classroom” (p. 102). Both Desimone, et al. (2002) and Hargreaves and Fullan (2015) suggest potential benefits that could impact a number of the sub-domains in Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) framework, specifically: “Collaborating with other professionals,” “Attending to relational aspects of instruction,” “Establishing and maintaining the social and academic culture,” and “Preparing and planning for high quality instruction.”

Much of the conflict in the literature around the perceived or measured impact of teacher professional development seems to rest on what outcomes are desired and by what means are we trying to achieve them. There are certainly questions around the necessary intensity and duration of teacher exposure to new learning; however, the Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) synthesis showed that in some studies, measurable positive impact could be achieved in sustained teacher learning over a great variation in time: as little as 20 hours and as great as 220 hours. These researchers additionally concluded that effective TPD must, “provide a bridge to leadership opportunities to ensure a comprehensive system focused on the growth and development of teachers” (p. vii). I am hopeful that my research will add a voice to this conversation and provide that bridge for teachers.
Summary and Research Questions

In summary, the research on TPD focuses heavily on student achievement outcomes and investigates a very narrow scope of topics that represent the current landscape of student accountability. The dominance of Teacher Content Area Development, Classroom Management Strategies, Use of Computers / Technology in the Classroom, and Reading Strategies are incomplete when it comes to developing the many competencies necessary to serve as a teacher effectively. Student performance will always be a necessary consideration in any aspect of teacher training either pre-or in-service; however, such a narrow view of what skills are needed both to be successful and continue to grow in the field is problematic and limiting. As Sykes and Wilson (2015) note, there are 34 discrete competencies, sorted under two core domains, Instructional and Professional Role Responsibilities, that educators need to develop and expand in order to successfully fulfill the role of a professional teacher. The current offerings that most educators are provided, both in preparation for a career in teaching and while in-service through professional development, do not adequately address and prepare teachers across the wide variety of identified competencies necessary to be a highly skilled educator.

Thus, if teachers do not feel fully supported in developing instructional and Professional Role Responsibility competencies, and our current models lack opportunities to do so, then it would be reasonable to conclude that we are not adequately supporting both our children and our teachers. This study aims to answer the following questions:

- What do teachers who have administrative certification describe learning from these programs?
• How do they report this learning impacting their teaching and professional lives?
Chapter 3:

METHODS

Introduction

By employing an iterative and reflective process of data collection and analysis, this phenomenological study sought to answer questions about what teachers learn in administrative programs and what they report was the impact of that learning on their teaching and professional lives. Qualitative sources of data, such as interviews and focus groups, served as the foundation for this investigation into how participants reflected upon their experiences with current models of teacher preparation and in-service professional development.

This chapter is organized into six sections: (1) rationale for a qualitative methods approach; (2) site selection; (3) sampling and participant selection; (4) data collection; (5) data analysis; and (6) summary.

Rationale for a Qualitative Methods Approach

Oriented by a phenomenological and hermeneutic approach to research, this study was conducted over seven months with full-time teachers from districts in Delaware County, PA. Nakkula and Ravitch (1998) describe hermeneutics as a philosophical orientation that frames and considers how individuals interpret and make meaning of the world in ways that are individualized and contextualized. It is the knowledge derived from this individualized context that allows individuals to interpret their own experiences. Moustakas (1994) explains that the goal of phenomenological research is to “obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essence of the experience” (p.13). Blending hermeneutics with
a phenomenological approach allowed me to focus on the lived experiences and reflective perceptions of the teachers. The personalized recollections expressed through individual interviews and one focus group allowed me to understand better what experiences each of the participants shared in having obtained administrative certification and how, if at all, that learning has impacted them.

Maxwell (2012) notes that a qualitative study should possess four components: research relationships with those you wish to study; selection of individuals and settings you seek information about; a manner to collect information for analysis; and finally, the analysis or sense-making of the data collected. As a practitioner conducting research within the county where I have long-established relationships, I was able to use those connections to recruit participants and establish a research relationship with those that I interviewed. The qualitative research process allowed me to place the research questions at the center of this study, map out a process where each question linked to a method or methods, then analyze the data while checking validity. Ultimately, this led to a set of initial themes which were then expanded upon and served as the basis for the findings presented in Chapter 4. As a result of this process, I am hopeful that this research can contribute to the formulation of a reasoned and informed policy for my school district for professional development, while also contributing to the research on teacher preparation and in-service training.

Participant interviews undergird the research conducted in this study. As a data source, interviews provided the opportunity to engage with each individual for an extended period allowing for the phenomenological aspect of each educator’s lived experiences to be shared. The experiences shared through the interviews provided a
composite picture of the learning each participant derived from their administrative certification program. As Weiss (1995) notes, the key reasons for conducting qualitative interviews are to:

- Develop full and contextualized descriptions of experiences and perspectives
- Understand and integrate multiple individual perspectives
- Describe processes and experiences in depth
- Develop holistic perspectives, realities, experiences, and phenomena
- Learn how participants interpret events and experiences
- Bridge intersubjectivity between researcher and study participant

Interviews were a critical resource in conducting this investigation. As Weiss (1995) notes, interviews allow the researcher the opportunity to understand, describe, develop, and learn about the contexts and experiences of each of the participants. For the purposes of this study, it was critical for me, the researcher, to gather the full array of experiences that each of the participants had in their early teaching careers, moving on to the decisions around why they entered an administrative certification program, and ultimately, what they felt the impact of that choice was on their lives. The personal interactions and connections that interviews provide, as opposed to other data collection methods, helped provide a complete picture of the lived experiences each of the participants.

In addition to interviews, a focus group was conducted to add information by creating a forum where interaction between participants allowed for conventional understanding to evolve beyond the individualized context (Kitzinger, 1994). Kitzinger explains that “participants [in focus groups] reflect upon each other’s ideas, [and] ensure
that the data is organic/interconnected” (1994, p. 116). On the whole, the use of these two data collection methods, through a sample of teachers across a variety of local settings, afforded the best opportunity to investigate the lived experiences of the participants and how each related to the investigation of learning in administrative certification programs and its impact on their lives. The collective impact of this data resulted in findings that can inform the literature on teacher preparation and teacher professional development.

**Site Selection**

Miles and Huberman (1994) ask, “If one cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything, even within a single case, how does one limit the parameters of the study” (p. 36)? Because my ultimate goal was to inform local policy and practice, it made sense to study individuals from school systems within the same county because our local policy decisions and actions are generally measured against the actions and decisions made by other local school districts within our county. Therefore, when deciding how to limit the parameters of individuals selected for this study, it made the most sense to remain local. Selection of a site requires knowledge of the setting and the feasibility of accessing data and building relationships with the study participants (Maxwell, 2012). While I did not study their sites, per se, I chose to draw participants from local school districts because of the potential experiences that the participants may have had as a result of the locations in
which they worked. My School Board would consider the findings of this research more relevant if local contexts were represented in the research.¹

Including mine, our county has 15 school districts, and my professional connections to many of the district administrators in those districts allowed me to recruit a sample of administratively certified teachers in other local districts. The districts in Delaware County, PA are highly diverse in terms of socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic makeup, academic performance, and student enrollment. Having access to such a variety of districts so close to my own allowed for the potential of identifying participants from several different contexts, and further develop, what Cohen and Crabtree (2006) define as a typical picture “of a phenomenon … manifest under ordinary circumstances” (para. 2). Drawing from a diverse sample of sites allowed for the inclusion of more participants from a broader demographic and experience base in the field of teaching.

The 15 districts in Delaware County, PA vary greatly in geographical size, student enrollment, demographics, and socioeconomic makeup. The per-pupil expenditures range from a low of approximately $12,000 per student per year to a high of approximately $24,500. As a point of reference, according to the 2016 Annual Survey of School System Finances administered by the U.S. Census Bureau, the average per-pupil expenditure in Pennsylvania was approximately $15,400. The enrollments of Delaware County school districts are as small as 3,300 students and go as high as 12,200. The ethnic/racial make-up of these districts varies substantially in their concentration of

¹ The term “relevant” in this sentence is not meant to imply research relevance. It is offered as an example of how my local School Board considers the relevance of a study and if its findings reflect our local contexts.
minority populations, ranging from as low as 7% to as high as 88% of the district student population.

Additionally, the socioeconomic composition represented among the 15 districts also varies greatly. The county has three of the wealthiest and two of the poorest suburban school districts in all of eastern Pennsylvania, according to the American Community Survey (2012-2016) published by the U.S. Census Bureau. The Free and Reduced Lunch populations range from 100% receiving assistance to a low of 9%. Because of the small sample size of 15 participants, it was difficult to determine if ethnic makeup, population size, or socioeconomic factors impacted the findings in this study; however, this is certainly something to be considered in future research. Regardless, my belief was that including teachers within the county afforded me an opportunity to learn from the personal experiences of typical teachers who practice in settings both similar to and different from my own.

**Sampling and Participant Selection**

To be considered for this study, participants needed to have earned their administrative certification within the previous five years from a nationally accredited college/university through a traditional administrative certification pathway. Having earned administrative certification recently was critical to this investigation so that participants could draw upon detailed recollections of the learning and experiences they had while in their programs. This criterion however, meant that no one in my school district would be eligible to be included in the study, as every administratively certified teacher in the district had earned their certification more than 10 years beforehand. Having a 10-year history as an administrator in Delaware County, PA allowed me to
leverage existing relationships with others in similar positions across neighboring districts to identify potential participants for the study. I began by contacting the other 14 school districts in Delaware County, PA by emailing their superintendents and human resource directors a brief overview of my research and attaching the participant recruitment letter that was approved through the University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board (IRB) process (see Appendix F for a sample of the Participant Recruitment Letter).

As a result of reaching out to colleagues in neighboring districts, I was able to compile a list of 79 classroom teachers who possessed administrative certification across seven of the 15 school districts in the county. To narrow the list of 79 teachers, I was able to look up each of the teachers’ certification profiles in the public portal of the Pennsylvania Teacher Information Management System to narrow the original list down to 31 individuals who had at least five years of teaching experience and administrative certification.

I then looked up the email addresses from the district websites for each of the 31 teachers that were referred to me by their districts as being potentially eligible for the study. I emailed each of the 31 teachers a recruitment letter and the informed consent form that had been approved by the University of Pennsylvania’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Included in that email was a short study recruitment questionnaire consisting of 6 questions that were used to confirm eligibility for the study (see Appendix G for a copy of the Short Recruitment Questionnaire). Of the 31 whom I contacted, 27 completed the questionnaire, with 18 individuals meeting the selection criteria. I was then able to set up interviews with 15 of the eligible teachers as three of the individuals
never returned their consent forms. The 15 teachers who met the selection criteria and returned signed consent forms became the sample for this study. Of the seven schools with no representation in this study, three districts did not respond to multiple requests to be included in the study, two districts had prolonged IRB processes that would not have met the timeframe of this study, and the final three districts did not have personnel who responded to my inquiries to be included in the study.

By drawing from the diverse districts of Delaware County, PA, I attempted to create a sample of teachers across multiple buildings, contexts, experiences, and demographics. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) report that the concept of typical cases draws from the premise that by increasing the number of contextual experiences from which research is gathered and identifying a diverse sample of participants, the researcher can increase the likelihood that the findings won’t be attributed to a deviant, extreme, or unusual sample. Although this study was phenomenological in nature, attempting to identify participants across a wide variety of professional experiences and contexts was done in the hopes of reducing the fact that the relatively small sampling could result in unusual findings.

The 15 participants included in this study came from seven different districts across Delaware County, PA. They ranged in experience from six to 24 years in the classroom. The mean number of years teaching was 13.7 when the interviews began, with a mean age of 44 years old. The participants’ mean number of years teaching when they entered into their administrative certification programs was 10.4 years. Eleven of the participants were female, and four were male. This sample ended up closely resembling a nationally representative sample of teachers in terms of average gender, age,
and length of time teaching. According to the most recent Schools and Staffing Survey (NCES, 2011-2012), the average age of teachers in the United States was 42 years old with nearly three out of four being female; additionally, the average experience of teachers nationally was 14 years. The sample in this study was similar to some of the typical demographic and experience indicators in the national sample of practicing teachers. Maxwell (2012) suggests that “deliberately selecting cases, individuals, situations that are known to be typical provide far more confidence that the conclusions adequately represent the average members of the population” (p. 88).

As mentioned above, the 15 participants were drawn from neighboring districts of varying size, racial, and socioeconomic composition. This diversity of educational contexts provided for the ability to present findings on teachers’ experiences working with various student populations. Remaining faithful to the selection criterion of teachers having obtained administrative certification in the past five years and by pulling from various levels of experience and educational settings, I was able to develop a diverse sample of participants. Maxwell (2012) suggests that it is possible to make claims of “internal generalizability” and that “descriptive, interpretative, and theoretical validity” can be achieved through internal generalizability (p. 115). Maxwell (2012) goes on to suggest that the concept of internal generalizability is highly important to qualitative research and speaks to the ability of the researcher to generalize the accounts and experiences of the observed sample and extend that to other individuals, time periods or settings. By recruiting a variety of participants from multiple settings, I believe, help to establish internal generalizability.
Data Collection

Once University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained and formal written consent received by each participant, data collection began using two qualitative research methods of data collection: interviews and one focus group. I conducted 15 individual interviews and one single follow-up focus group session. A 14 question semi-structured interview, taking approximately one hour to conduct, was given to each of the participants. Interviews predominantly took place in teachers’ classrooms after-school and in a few cases over the phone, through Skype, and in one instance, a coffee shop. The semi-structured interview protocol allowed individuals to provide detailed personal narratives reflecting upon their lived experiences of having gone through an administrative certification program and subsequently continuing to teach in the classroom. The interview format and the individual questions focused on unpacking the learning experiences each of the teachers had undertaken to arrive at this point in their careers. The interview protocol began with questions about pre-service teacher-preparation, which, for some of the participants, had been decades earlier. Progressing through the participants’ experiential past to their most recent learning helped the interview to build upon prior, potentially obscured knowledge, to more present and lucid recollections of the learning that took place most recently.

Following the principles of emergent design (Creswell, 2009), I developed a nine-question follow-up semi-structured protocol that I used with five members in a focus group. The focus group participants represented a range in experience of nearly twenty years. The group was chosen as a result of re-reading the initial interview transcripts and conducting an initial round of coding on a mostly global/thematic basis. I determined
from the individual interviews that there was a small group of participants who seemed able to readily and deeply articulate the impact of administrative certification on them personally and professionally. To select members of the focus group, I chose those individuals who had shared a variety of themes in their interviews and provided the most detailed experiences related to the impact of acquiring the certification.

**Interviews and focus group.** Once I identified the potential participant pool from the list of individuals that were compiled through local administrators, I emailed the 18 potential participants to establish initial contact and asked them to participate in a short recruitment questionnaire to confirm eligibility for the study. Fifteen participants emerged from this process. Once the contact was established, and consent forms were returned, we arranged a mutually agreed upon time to discuss the topics to be covered during the semi-structured interview. I remained as flexible as I could to their needs in terms of any time constraints that existed in terms of gaining access to them. With my district supporting me in this study, I was also able to create time in my schedule to allow for more flexibility in setting up interview times. This meant that interviews occurred before, during, and after school times, sometimes late in the evening, seven days a week.

I framed the initial interview questions around the following:

- Motivations for becoming a teacher;
- Issues or challenges teachers had upon entering the profession and what, if anything, they felt was lacking in their preparation;
- Reflections on in-service professional development and its impact on teaching competencies;
• The specific content of administrative training that they felt was beneficial (or not) to develop their skills as a teacher, and finally
• How their learning may have impacted their relationships with peers, their administrators, students, the job, and the district.

Drawing on Patton’s (2015) work regarding the six types of interview questions, the interviews and focus group focused mainly on experience and behavior questions, opinion and value questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, and to a smaller degree, background/demographic questions (many of which had been answered by the short demographic pre-screening questionnaire). Experience and behavior questions assisted me in understanding what the participants past experiences were with teacher preparation and professional development; and, how those influenced their feelings about what kind of teacher they had become – allowing participants to reflect on their career arcs as teachers. With opinion and value questions, I was able to learn what type of training the teachers received that they viewed as valuable to the development of both instructional and professional role competencies.

I also used a series of questions about the feelings participants had about their new knowledge and how it related to their practice. These types of questions were more open-ended and provided me with insights into what each of the participants believed changed for them as individuals as a result of their new learning. Knowledge questions were also an essential part of this process of investigating tangible learning from the administrative coursework and practicum experience. Having participants who had earned their certification within the past five years was critical to getting specific examples of pre-certification skills and knowledge and how the new training may have
impacted them in post-certification practice. A copy of the semi-structured interview protocol can be found in Appendix H (Interview Protocol and Question Mapping).

Upon concluding the interviews and preliminary analysis to identify emerging themes, a group of participants who expressed varied themes and detailed experiences in their interviews was invited to participate in a small focus group. Kreuger (1998) defines a focus group as a "carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment" (p.18). The focus group allowed me to create a shared experience among a variety of educators, where the personal themes that emerged from the individual interviews could be explored and ultimately expanded upon collaboratively. The focus group met virtually during an online Google Hangout session once all of the interviews had concluded in late fall.

The interviews and focus group were audio recorded in order to allow for detailed data analysis and for verbatim quotations to be reported as part of the findings. I used the Transcribe Me! iPhone application and a backup Sony digital media recorder to record the interviews and focus group. The use of these discreet recording devices allowed me to place them in a manner that did not distract participants from focusing on the questions and allowed them to interact with me freely. Without the burden of notetaking, I better engaged each individual and monitored their non-verbal communication just as much as what was being said aloud. Having trained as a counselor, I was able to be highly engaged with the non-verbal communication presented by each participant. This was critical to allowing me the opportunity to adjust questions and my physicality and nonverbal communication in order to help participants feel more at ease during the interviews and focus group.
Throughout the interviews, there were times when participants found it difficult to recollect concrete, detailed examples that could be used to illustrate their thinking. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for additional, unscripted, highly contextualized probes to be asked. This facilitated a deeper engagement with what participants were saying in the moment and allowed for the inclusion of focused follow-up questions. This also helped me to connect more personally and deeply to the participants and, thus, share in the process of evoking highly personal memories that illustrated their lived experiences.

Electronic transcripts of the interviews were stored both in the “cloud” through the password protected TranscribeMe application and within my school district’s encrypted virtual drive as a backup. Each interviewee chose a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality and was never referred to by name during the individual interviews. The focus group did share their real names during the actual recording session with each other. However, names were redacted from all transcripts and used their chosen pseudonyms. A list linking names with their pseudonyms was stored separately from the audio recordings and transcripts on my personal MacBook, which is dual-encryption protected. In preparation for analysis, transcripts were imported into the online data analysis software application, Dedoose.

**Data Analysis**

As noted by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010), “The initial step in qualitative data analysis is reading the interview transcripts, observational notes, or documents to be analyzed” (p.465). Additionally, according to Maxwell (2012), there are several analytic options available to identify themes and report on them. These fall into three main
groups: (1) categorizing strategies, (2) connecting strategies, and, (3) memos (Maxwell, 2012). I began the process of data analysis by using a series of categorizing strategies around some of the codes I had developed from my conceptual framework. Specifically, according to my conceptual framework, I believed that the lion’s share of the teachers’ reported experiences would be related to the learning from and impact of administrative certification on competencies related to Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) Instructional Domain. Additionally, I believed there would be some similarities in the participants’ reporting around the influence (positive and negative) of teacher preparation and in-service professional development. However, once I began to use the preliminary set of codes as a lens during my first review of the interviews, it became clear that I would have to evolve my coding structure inductively to reflect better some of the themes and content that were beginning to present themselves.

During the first reading of the interviews in their entirety, I used the initial preliminary coding list as a way to organize my thinking without actually coding any of the documents. I created a list of jottings where consistent comments and unique statements were recorded to create short analytic memos. The initial reading of the research resulted in the creation of an “Emerging Findings” memo, which I shared with my chair.

Once the initial “Emerging Findings” memo was created and discussed with my chair, an iterative process of code development occurred which focused, inductively, on the conceptualization of what participants were describing in their interviews. Remaining true to the phenomenological aspect of listening to and subsequently analyzing the lived experiences of the participants in this study, I developed a coding list that reflected both
some of the original hypothesized potential findings and blended those with the newly
epressed experiences of the participants. The result of this pairing between codes based
on the initial conceptual framework and the subsequent codes developed from the lived
experiences of the participants marked the real jumping off point for telling the stories of
the participants’ experiences and learning. The resulting code list consisted of 18 codes
that were applied to the transcripts throughout three comprehensive reviews of the data
(see Appendix I for Thematic Codes from Interviews).

In general, each excerpt received a single code; however, in a small number of
cases, multiple codes were applied to some excerpts. The frequency of those codes
across the 15 individual interviews and focus group is shown in Table 1. Codes are
presented in alphabetical order, and bolded codes indicate the condensed coding list
utilized to develop the global themes that were the focus of the analysis that ultimately
was presented as findings in Chapter 4. For a code to be considered in the global themes,
it needed to be present in a majority of the participants. Codes that were not bolded were
those that were present with fewer than 8 participants. In reference to the number of
codes presented in Table 1, the total number of instances that a code appeared in all of the
transcripts combined is presented in the code frequency column.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code with Explanation</th>
<th>Code Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAD - Being or Becoming an Administrator</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID:ARA - Instructional Domain: Attending to Relational Aspects of Instruction</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID:INST - Instructional Domain: Engaging in Instructional Improvement</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Utilizing the query functions in the search tabs within Dedoose allowed me to generate culled coded excerpt reports that organized only the coded portions of the transcripts into separate lists. These coded lists were then exported into Excel, where a single spreadsheet was created that noted the pseudonym of the speaker, the date the excerpt was coded, and the entire portion of text that was culled and coded. By engaging in the iterative process of reading, coding, rereading, and coding again, global themes began to present themselves from the whole of the participants’ stories. The process of reviewing the excerpts attached to each of the codes lent itself to connecting strategies resulting in the development of emergent themes. This querying process resulted in the construction of a “Global Themes” memo which allowed for the development of some
initial findings that could address the research questions. After conversations with my chair, we landed on some of the key themes of leader empathy, colleague and administrative relationships, connectedness to the organization, and perceived self-efficacy. Once these themes began to emerge, a condensed code list of 12, shown in Table 1 in bold, was identified from the larger thematic code listing. I then reviewed the transcripts with the 12 codes once more to see if any excerpts were missed during previous coding sessions. I subsequently applied the final 12 codes to nine additional excerpts.

**Researcher Role / Issues of Validity**

As a researcher, I believed that having received 200 hours of training in active and effective listening during the attainment of my counseling certificate helped to engage participants in an open, reflexive, and caring manner. Additionally, while recruiting participants, I disclosed that I had gone through administrative certification. I believed that this would help establish commonality and assist in the development of rapport with participants.

As an individual who had earned administrative certification and practiced as a professional teacher with that certification for a few years, I was able to draw upon those experiences and interact with participants from a shared common place. However, it was not lost on me that by holding a position of district-wide leadership in a neighboring school district the participants may have felt some reticence to speak openly and perhaps negatively about their own district’s efforts around professional development, administrators, or colleagues. While I recognized that this was a potential challenge to the openness and willingness to share their lived experiences honestly, I believe that I
was able to establish trust with each of the participants and elevate the trustworthiness of the findings reported.

Given the small number of participants and the limited amount of research on this topic, I saw areas where validity could be challenged. Denzin (1970, 2009) proposed that there are essentially four types of triangulation that impact the validity of the analysis and interpretation of the findings. These are known as data, investigator, theory and methodological triangulation. Triangulation promotes validation of data by testing the consistency of data collected across methods and instruments. In the case of this study, despite the limited number of instruments, lack of a variety of theoretical frameworks, and a single researcher conducting the data collection, the thoughtful and methodical review and coding of the transcripts which included multiple analytic memos, member checks, and critical friend reviews of my thematic coding helped to establish a high degree of validity.

One of the concerns around validity was potential bias resulting from the use of volunteer participants. Study participants who were willing to engage in the research could have had more favorable perspectives on professional development and its benefits than those who had chosen not to participate. In light of this possibility, I had to employ participant validation, or “member checks,” to address this concern. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) note, “if the investigator is to be able to purport that his or her reconstructions are recognizable to audience members as adequate representations of their own (and multiple) realities, it is essential that they be given the opportunity to react to them” (p. 314). Thus, the validation offered by members that what was reported
represents their feelings and experiences serves to increase the overall validity of the findings as reported in the study.

Having the opportunity to engage in critical friends’ discussions of the transcripts and memos allowed for both the formal and informal interrogation of my thinking and conclusions. Working with members of my mid-career program, an administrator in my current district, and two members of the teaching faculty in my district, not to mention a number of extended conversations with my chair, I had more than 30 opportunities to engage in conversations around the analysis and subsequent findings reported in this study. In addition to those critical friends discussions, the use of memos as a component of reflection during the data analysis for this study proved invaluable. Rogers (2018) believes that the use of “analytic memos increase[s] the credibility of a study” (p. 890). He goes to share the conclusion of Shenton (2004) that, “Credibility in qualitative research is comparable to internal validity in quantitative research.”

**Summary**

The methods employed in this qualitative study were meant to provide a transparent and systematic investigatory process that sought to answer the guiding questions of this research. The use of reflective and analytic memos, along with interrogations of the data by both critical friends and member checking, helped guide the analysis and assisted me in the chunking and identification of coded excerpts into global themes. This process and formal analysis of the data led to the findings in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4:
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

This phenomenological study examines the questions:

- What do teachers who have administrative certification describe learning from their administrative certification programs?
- How do they report this learning impacting their teaching and professional lives?

While considerable time and research have been applied to investigating the impact and learning attributed to in-service professional development for practicing teachers, the research on the type of learning associated with obtaining administrative certification and its impact on teaching competency is severely lacking. The reams of journal articles and publications written about the varying professional development types and delivery methods that have the most impact on student achievement and professional competency range in the thousands; however, most, if not all of these pieces, tend to focus on district- or building-led programs, professional presentations, outside presenters, and peer-led activities. The participants in this study had a number of things to say about which types of these professional development activities they felt were more valuable than the others; however, in terms of the overall value of in-service, district-provided, professional development, the one consensus that could be established was that most, if not all of it, was generally considered ineffective in that it has had minimal long-term impact on participants’ skill sets as professional educators. This doesn’t mean to say that every professional development activity delivered by the district was reported by the participants as being unsuccessful in improving teaching competencies. On the
contrary, this section will highlight a handful of those past activities that were regarded as successful in developing teaching competency by the participants. Despite the lack of positive consensus in regards to past TPD, all 15 participants reported that the experience of having gone through an administrative certification program as one of the most valuable forms of professional development in their professional careers. This chapter will explore how this experience was valuable to each of the participants’ learning. Additionally, identifying some of the elements that made past TPD activities meaningful will allow for a comparison of similar attributes engendered in administrative certification programs.

To better understand what individuals report having learned from their administrative certification programs and its impact on them, I recruited fifteen individuals with ties to Delaware County, PA who met the criteria of having been practicing, currently employed, full-time, classroom teachers for at least five years, each having earned their administrative certification within the previous five years. It became clear to me early on in the interviews that I would need to expand my initial understanding of how obtaining administrative certification would impact individual teachers. My positionality in this study predisposed me to believe that the training associated with administrative certification programs would positively impact classroom instructional practice. I had served as a classroom teacher and guidance counselor for three years after having obtained my principal certification. I strongly believed that the learning I gained from having been trained as an administrator translated into my instructional practice and had a direct impact on my students’ achievement. I admit that I
did not have any data to prove this, but it was an idea that I carried with me for years and eventually served to lay the foundation for the research I conducted here.

Reflecting on my own experience, I believed it would be valuable to investigate what individuals report having learned from administrative certification programs and if they felt it impacted their teaching and professional lives. Given the vast amount of public and personal money spent on these types of programs, I believed this research could represent an important contribution to the conversations about how best to prepare teachers and what kind of professional development veteran teachers find most valuable to their career development.

The initial basis for my line of inquiry in this study was to investigate whether educators reported that the administrative certification program had impacted their teaching competency, as conceptualized by the Sykes and Wilson (2015) framework for Instructional and Professional Role competencies. Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) framework served as the template for this study not only because it was the most recent framework on teacher competency at the time that I began this research, but it also looks at teacher competency through a lens in which skills are described as being both necessary in current practice and as something that can be developed as a result of additional professional interactions and experiences. When this study began, their work had only recently been completed, and it represented at the time the most comprehensive review of the literature and analysis of the topic of teacher competency. As stated previously, I began with a personal belief that the training associated with administrative certification would result in bolstered instructional skills, something that 9 out of 15 participants reported as being significantly underdeveloped as a result of their pre-service
teacher preparation programs. As the interviews concluded and I began to draw out some of the global themes in the data, I quickly discovered that there was more in the results than a simple expansion of instructional skillsets.

From the very first interview, I began to hear that both the content and structure associated with administrative certification had had a profound impact on the professional lives of each of the individuals participating. In general, the training provided the opportunity to reflect on the style and content of professional development that they believed would be most impactful at this point in their careers. It changed the types of relationships they had with colleagues and administrators and improved many of the participants’ connection to the vocation of teaching and, in some cases, to their organizations. Many found new ways to exercise leadership in their schools, something that a number of the participants expressed that they hadn’t felt prepared to do in the past, having felt ill-equipped by their teacher preparation programs or professional development to do so.

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the aforementioned research questions organized in the following manner: (a) participant background and positionality, (b) new learning, and (c) impact on teaching and professional life.

**Participant Background and Positionality**

The participants in this study represent over 200 combined years of teaching experience with a mean of 13.7 years serving as classroom teachers. Table 2 provides a summary of the participants’ professional backgrounds.
Table 2  
*Participant Background*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Years of Experience in Education</th>
<th>Years of Experience in District</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexis</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augusta</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britney</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Grades 1-5 Special Ed.</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Elem Music</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrett</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>MS Band</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giulia</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6-8 Science</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newman</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6-8 Tech/Eng</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>HS Special Ed.</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>HS English</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilly</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>HS Science/Special Ed.</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parker</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>HS Math</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the fifteen participants represented in this table, six came from the elementary level, four from the middle-school level and five from the high-school level. Their positions varied greatly within their organizations, and, except for two music teachers at different levels (middle school and elementary), no two participants shared the same position within their respective organizations. Eleven of the participants identified as female and four identified as male. The mean years of experience in their current districts was 9.4 at the time the interviews took place, and the mean years employed as certified teachers was 13.7. Thus, the sample was fairly balanced across school levels, was more female than male, represented various instructional subjects, and nearly matched the average years of
experience in the county, which was 13.8 years at the time the interviews were conducted.

**Participant positionality.** I believe it is valuable to present a brief picture of the reasons each participant chose to pursue administrative certification because each participant’s context and experience guided their decision to pursue administrative certification. Table 3 (below) summarizes each participant’s reported motivations and reasoning for obtaining administrative certification. This information was gained by reviewing the individual responses of each of the participants and then, through an iterative process of multiple coding sessions, I generated 11 thematic summary statements that, I believe, captured the underlying sentiment each individual was trying to express when asked why they chose to pursue administrative certification. I then checked the statements with the sub-sample of teachers who participated in the focus group as an indication of the accuracy of the coding. Only one instance, the code for “Self-Improvement,” necessitated a return to the original coding document to make adjustments. It was determined by the focus group that “Self-Improvement” should be its own code as the two individuals, Augusta and Christine, had made statements that were originally attributed to “Learn to be a Leader.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Anne      | DI - Desire to influence the organization  
            | F - Financial gain  
            | PS - Peer support to become a leader |
| Alexis    | BM - Broaden marketability  
            | DI - Desire to influence the organization  
<pre><code>        | LL - Learn to be a leader |
</code></pre>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Augusta   | DI - Desire to influence the organization  
FR - Frustration with current leadership  
SI - Self-improvement |
| Brittney  | DI - Desire to influence the organization  
LL - Learn to be a leader  
MO - Motivated positively by current leadership |
| Carmen    | DI - Desire to influence the organization  
F - Financial gain  
MO - Motivated positively by current leadership |
| Christine | DI - Desire to influence the organization  
MO - Motivated positively by current leadership  
SI - Self-improvement |
| Debbie    | DI - Desire to influence the organization  
LL - Learn to be a leader  
PS - Peer support to become a leader |
| Garrett   | BM - Broaden marketability  
F - Financial gain  
PS - Peer support to become a leader |
| Giulia    | DI - Desire to influence the organization  
LL - Learn to be a leader  
MO - Motivated positively by current leadership |
| James     | DI - Desire to influence the organization  
F - Financial gain  
MO - Motivated positively by current leadership |
| Lara      | DI - Desire to influence the organization  
LDM - Learn structure of school decision-making  
Understand the language of administration |
| Lilly     | DI - Desire to influence the organization  
F - Financial gain  
MO - Motivated positively by current leadership |
| Newman    | DI - Desire to influence the organization  
F - Financial gain  
MO - Motivated positively by current leadership |
| Parker    | BM - Broaden marketability  
DI - Desire to influence the organization |
Table 3 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>LL - Learn to be a leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MO - Motivated positively by current leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UD - Understand data better</td>
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Of the stated reasons that the participants chose to pursue administrative certification, the most frequent were: Desire to influence the organization (13 participants), Financial gain (8 participants), and finally, Motivated by current leadership (8 participants). The fact that these three reasons were reported by at least a majority of the individuals interviewed necessitated further exploration. The remaining thematic statements, while important to individual participants, occurred among a minority of those interviewed.

“Desire to influence the organization” and “Motivated by current leadership,” tended to occur among individuals who not only had had existing positive relationships with their current administrators but among the participants who also identified a desire to extend their influence beyond their individual classrooms. In contrast, there were two individuals (i.e., Tracy and Parker) who reported being motivated in a negative way by their administration, with each stating that one of the reasons they chose to become administrators was to do it “better” than their current building leadership. But, as this sentiment was clearly articulated in the negative, it was not included as “Motivated by current leadership.” Only in the case of a clearly articulated statement that a principal or assistant principal suggested to one of the participants they pursue administrative certification, was the reasoning coded as, “Motivated by current leadership.”
The reasons for enrolling in an administrative certification program were also explored during the focus group. Three of the five members in the focus group reported both “Desire to influence the organization” and “Motivated by current leadership” as reasons for seeking administrative certification. When asked whether they believed that their current administrator supported their decision, all three answered with an emphatic “yes.” Furthermore, all three reported that they wanted to better serve and have a wider influence in their current organizations. When asked to define what they meant by “wider,” one participant, Lilly, responded, “I felt very comfortable with what I was doing in the classroom, but felt I could be more helpful to teachers and parents if I learned what principals learned.” In only 1 of 13 participant interviews, did the “Desire to influence the organization” mention students and classroom instructional practice. Britney reported, “I knew that if I understood what principals were looking for, I could help teachers and my students better.” I will return to this point raised by Britney in the discussion section of this dissertation because it was something I had hoped to hear more of but was unable to elicit from the participants.

“Financial gain” was mentioned by slightly more than half of the participants (8 of 15); however, not one of them reported that they had achieved the larger increase in pay they had associated with obtaining administrative certification. It was mentioned by four participants that, as a result of certification, they received a lane, step, or salary adjustment in their collective bargaining agreements, resulting in slight to moderate pay increases. Lane, step, or salary adjustments, which are common in public school collective bargaining agreements, are something that many teachers earn by accumulating additional graduate credits, regardless of whether it is part of an administrative
certification program. Interestingly, while largely unrealized, monetary compensation was mentioned by over half of the individuals interviewed as a reason to pursue certification, and no one reported that they regretted the decision to pursue the training and the personal costs associated with paying for the coursework.

It is valuable to recognize that the participants, in general, felt supported by their administrators, hoped to achieve some form of financial acceleration, and were motivated to influence their organizations positively. The findings in this study need to bear in mind that the lived experiences of the participants in their jobs and their motivations for obtaining administrative certification must be considered when interpreting further findings. What each of the participants experienced in preparing to become teachers in preservice education and as in-service teachers have had an impact on how they conceptualize their understanding of the competencies they have developed as a result of their administrative certification programs. Competencies, as Sykes and Wilson (2015) believe,

... may be taught and learned, their enactment will be influenced not only by what teachers know and know how to do, but also by the conditions of teachers’ work. Competence then is not simply what teachers bring to the contexts in which they work but also what those contexts support or limit. (2015, p.1)

Participants’ New Learning

Participants were appreciative of the opportunity to talk about the things they learned from their administrative certification programs. It seemed, in some cases, that the opportunity to stop and fully consider the learning from their programs provided almost a final validation of the importance of what they had done to impact their careers. It was not uncommon to hear participants stop and utter phrases such as, “I hadn’t really
thought about that until...” or, “This really makes me think about how...” Through open
dialog and some probing during the interviews, the participants began to share
meaningful experiences that, as they went on, provided a clear picture of new learning
which occurred as a result of their respective programs.

**Readiness for new learning.** Early on, a picture evolved around the type of
learning participants reported as valuable. The majority of participants (11 of 15)
reported that some of what they learned from their administrative certification programs
were things that had been missing or underdeveloped during their teacher preparation
programs. Each one of these eleven participants explained that their teaching programs
had tended to focus on developing the minimum competency needed for entry into the
profession of teaching and running their own classrooms. They reported, for example,
that their programs provided some experiences related to lesson planning, a minimal
understanding of special education, basic classroom management, and beginning
assessment strategies. A few of the participants were able to characterize how they had
felt underprepared entering into teaching and how they later developed the skills that they
needed to be successful. Christine shared that she, “...was not very well educated in how
to read an IEP [Individualized Education Plan] ...but in [her district], there was an in-
service, and they taught us how to read the SDIs [specially designed instruction] and the
rest of the IEP. James shared a similar sentiment in which he entered the field lacking
skills in classroom management, but it was through early administrative support that he
later developed the necessary competencies in that area. He expressed that there wasn’t,
“...enough emphasis, I felt on classroom management in my [preparation] program. [We
got] Just like little tips...It wasn’t until my principal pulled me aside and showed me...that
I got it.” Similar to what James and Christine revealed above, many of the participants believed, as Podolsky and Kini’s (2016) work demonstrates, that the experiences they received during the first few years of teaching in-service had a far greater impact on the development of their teaching competencies than any of their pre-service teacher preparation or structured, undifferentiated building-led professional development.

Mainly, the participants generally expressed that having nominal entry-level skills at the beginning of their careers was adequate because to become a skilled teacher required in-career experience. This realization tied closely to their thinking around what they hoped to learn in an administrative certification program. They believed that as a result of their career experiences (e.g., mentoring from veteran teachers, coaching from administrators, time to practice in their own classrooms) they had developed strong skills within the instructional domain. The result of having expanded their instructional competencies as a result of experience meant that they now felt ready to draw upon experiences outside of the classroom and develop a broader set of professional competencies.

The content and learning that each of the participants sought to gain as a result of earning administrative certification were regarded in a different light than the competencies teacher preparation sought to develop pre-service. Having had years of classroom experience, the participants saw the need to develop an understanding of educational and organizational competencies that they believed were beyond the daily planning mentioned in Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) Instructional Domains. As veteran educators, the participants recognized that a better understanding and application of competencies related to organizational and community needs had to be developed to best
serve the schools in which they worked and their personal career goals. Participants
believed that these competencies, akin to the professional role of teachers that Sykes and
Wilson (2015) highlight in their framework, could be best developed once a teacher had
moved beyond the early practicing phase in one’s career arc. It must also be noted that
none of the candidates expressed that what they were looking to gain in terms of new
competencies had been offered in prior in-service professional development
opportunities.

Although some participants identified elements of administrative training that had
impacted their instructional competencies, which I will discuss later in this chapter, what
many explicitly stated was that they had hoped to learn about elements of educator
practice that they only sporadically encountered as teachers, often outside of the
classroom, and felt as though hadn’t been fully developed through traditional in-service
professional development. As an example, Alexis explained, “We never really learned
much about school law and why things had to be done a certain way. I just think that with
so much happening, I needed to learn this.” Newman stated,

I was very well prepared for my first classroom in terms of instructional planning
and delivery, because of my [teaching] practicum, mostly, but in terms of
knowing anything about communication and working with parents and other
teachers, nothing. I hoped this [program] would help me with that.

James, as well, stated, “I had all of these different areas in education where I felt as
though I didn't have the knowledge to be in a position to lead.” James expressed further
that the idea of leading in his statement wasn’t necessarily as an administrator, but more
so about leading with peers and in department discussions. The sense that there were
skills that were necessary beyond those taught in teacher preparation and traditional in-service professional development offerings permeated these discussions.

In most cases, participants reported that the new learning they sought was something that they hadn’t believed was even necessary to have had when they were new teachers in the profession. On the contrary, most reported that it was only as a result of having had professional classroom experience that the new learning could be useful to them beyond their defined instructional responsibilities. Additionally, most reported that the demands of the administrative certification program seemed to require having had classroom experience specifically. Tracy clearly explained, “A lot of what I learned, I wouldn’t have been ready for or probably needed. It wasn’t until I had more experience that I needed to know some of these [administrative] things.” Lilly offered the example of, “…curriculum theory, I never realized how philosophical curriculum can get, political, as a teacher, you don’t need to know a whole lot about where it came from and why you are teaching it, you just teach it.” Lara takes this idea a little further by explaining how a proficient teacher could move to distinguished with some of the coursework from an administrative certification program,

I know many experienced teachers not as well-equipped, because they're not well-versed in some of the [leadership] course work, goals of Danielson Framework [for Teaching], etc. ... It's knowing that you live in Proficient, and you visit Distinguished. Knowing more could get you there.
It was clear that the belief that having some skill and experience contributes to the perceived benefits associated with having obtained administrative certification.\(^2\)

The idea of being ready to learn, or having the experience necessary to develop and benefit from administrative competencies fully supports the model illustrated in Figure 1, the Proposed Developmental Model of Teacher Proficiency. As teachers move through the experience bands of their careers and they develop and hone skills through practice and in-service professional development, to develop further professional competencies, teachers need to engage in new, developmentally appropriate experiences and challenges. Nearly all of the participants felt that the coursework and experiences from administrative certification programs wouldn’t necessarily be helpful to new teachers entering the profession. Many expressed that their prior teaching experiences had to be drawn from while working towards administrative certification. Examples provided below by Garrett and Lara spoke to this point directly when referencing the use of scenarios, or, as I understood this to mean, case-studies, in their administrative programs. Garrett explained, “The ability to learn from the challenging case studies based off of student or teacher scenarios just wouldn’t be there without having done this for years.” Carmen continued on this same aspect of being ready and drawing upon experience, “[Teacher preparation] It’s a different level because you're going to become a teacher with no experience. Wherein the leadership program, you’re using your scenarios day in and day out and how would you handle some of these things as a potential

\(^2\) Some may notice that the teachers’ descriptions of existing teaching skills and competencies in the examples provided may not be completely representative of high-quality instruction. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to further investigate the reported levels of teacher competencies.
administrator.” The idea of building off of experience and a developed set of competencies was also expressed by Lara when she noted, “I would never have been ready to learn about curriculum theory when I didn’t even know where the curriculum came from when I started.”

Lara, Garrett, and Carmen each expressed that having a base of experience allowed the case-studies/scenarios to draw upon prior learning that resulted in new learning. Lilly and Julia shared brief anecdotes in their interviews where experience was required to further their learning during past in-service professional development offerings in their districts. Lilly described some building-based professional development focused on co-teaching that extended throughout the year which “…was great. They asked us to draw upon some of our classroom experiences to help demonstrate opportunities for the class where we could improve.” Julia added that during one of her district’s professional development days, “a reading specialist asked us to share our strategies in order to provide feedback that we could take and use the next day.”

Although the examples of drawing on classroom experience were limited in prior TPD, one of the aspects that a number of the participants expressed as being important in the administrative certification program was that experience was drawn upon regularly and appeared to be a necessity in order for the program and learning to be successfully transferred to their daily practice.

All of the participants felt that, as more experienced educators, they were ready for a deeper understanding of the profession, which had been one of the main drivers for enrolling in an administrative certification program. A number of the participants expressed the desire to expand broader practical skills that focused on institutional and
organizational knowledge coupled with a more theoretical understanding of the broader institution of public education; something that none of the participants expressed that they had had opportunities to develop earlier in their careers, either through normal teaching/classroom experiences, or through structured professional development. Not one of the participants mentioned a desire to directly impact classroom instruction or expanding skills to improve student achievement as motivation for entering their administrative certification programs, which was something I had thought I would find.

As noted earlier, the participants suggested that more practical needs such as lesson planning, classroom management, student engagement strategies, individual special needs planning, and parental communication skills were far more critical to develop when entering the teaching profession than later in the profession. The participants generally relayed that as a result of having their own classrooms for a few years and gaining in-service experience they believed that they had adequately developed competencies in those areas at this point in their careers, the point at which they enrolled in an administrative certification program. Interestingly, only 3 of the 15 participants reported feeling prepared to demonstrate these practical skills upon entry into their first teaching assignments after having graduated from their teacher preparation programs. This appears to support the point earlier that teacher preparation programs provide minimal competency upon career start in education. This is further supported by Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) conceptualization of teaching competency as both skills that should exist and skills that must be developed as a result of experience.

The three participants who had felt most prepared for teaching were the only ones who reported having completed multiple practicums in two different settings, any
combination of urban, rural, suburban, large schools, small schools, as well as interactions with professors with practical expertise who could draw upon their own experiences while also presenting more theoretical aspects of educational practice. Each of the three reported that, as a result of their teacher preparation programs, they had made a reasonably smooth transition into their own classrooms. This was not a shared sentiment amongst the rest of the participants, who, to the contrary, expressed feeling overwhelmed by early experiences in their own classrooms. Debbie’s experience seemed to characterize what many spoke about entering into their first classroom.

I walked in. I was ready. I had my great outfit. I had my bag. I had my background knowledge. I had my energy and was hit in the face with the reality... And it was so sad to see how [challenging] kids could be so young. And I guess I hadn't really seen behavior issues that much during my student teaching, and so that was something I had to learn. ...the curriculum, I was ready to rock. But actually, the management, and in-classroom application, and motivating students was a challenge...it was an eye-opening year.

The majority felt that competencies in the areas of lesson planning, classroom management, student engagement strategies, individual special needs planning, and parental communication skills were generally underdeveloped in teacher preparation and something that they were required to learn while practicing as teachers in their own classrooms. When specifically questioned about this lack of preparation in these areas’ competencies, the members of the focus group reported that they believed they possessed only a minimal level of competency in those areas before entering the classroom. Giulia summed up the idea of her preparation to enter the classroom, “…through my bachelor's, my studies, I didn't walk away...coming out of my first year as a teacher, I did not walk away feeling very - I don't know what’s the word – confident, ready, I guess you could say, prepared. I didn't feel that at all.”
The practical skills that most of the participants reported lacking from their pre-service experiences are all required competencies outlined in the CCSSO, InTASC and CAEP certification requirements, but the fact that there was nothing to ground the early learning from the preparation programs with daily, repeated practice, may have been why these competencies weren’t developed to the point that each of the participants felt confident to apply them in their early settings. Having graduated from InTASC approved and certified programs, it could be presumed that the competencies were being taught, but in the case of 12 out of 15 participants, those competencies weren’t necessarily learned. This may also suggest that those who had had the opportunity to practice or approximate the skills with higher frequency through multiple practicum experiences may have had those competencies take hold in their practice sooner.

Having gained experience as practicing teachers, participants expressed that they believed that their administrative certification programs would provide insights into areas of teacher practice that went beyond the competencies needed to begin teaching in their own classrooms. The need to have experienced the classroom environment and learning to manage all aspects of it effectively was expressed as being a critical foundation before entering an administrative certification program. Many participants believed that as their skills in the classroom developed and they collected a variety of experiences, they began to redefine their sense of place in their organizations and how they could most effectively grow within it to serve all of its stakeholders. As practiced and skilled educators with a mean of 10.4 years of professional teaching experience at the time they chose to enroll in their administrative certification programs, they believed they were ready to bring this
experience to their certification programs and take from them valuable new learning that they believed could impact their practice.

**Variance from traditional in-service professional development.** Participants noted that their administrative certification programs differed from most of the traditional professional development they had experienced in the past in a variety of ways. It wasn’t that participants felt that all in-service professional development lacked the elements listed below. It was more that they articulated that the administrative programs were structured in such a way that they each provided:

- Accountability to a program or professor,
- Applicability to, or were actionable in, their daily work,
- Alignment to where they were in their professional career arcs and,
- Autonomy, specifically the ability to choose the learning that was most meaningful to them.

It is the sum of all these factors being present in the administrative certification program that the participants reported as making the experience so meaningful and influential to their practice.

Many participants clearly articulated that before enrolling in an administrative certification program, they felt ready to take on more responsibility in their buildings or departments but also felt that they lacked the training or experience to do so in a meaningful way. Even in the case of those few participants who felt that they “could do it better” than their current administrators, they recognized that they didn’t necessarily know “the speak” of administrators or know the complete picture as to why decisions were being made the way they were. When asked about their expectations of the
administrative certification programs to fulfill this need, the most common theme was
that the participants had arrived at a point in their careers where traditional professional
development designed for wide-scale audiences no longer provided the type of learning
that they felt engaged them or was meaningful. Christine expressed the idea of
“meaningful” this way, “I wanted to do something that made me a better educator.
Learning the language of administrators was more important than another PD day on
questioning techniques...I’ve had like four years of that by now.”

Brittney shared her frustrations with traditional professional development as,
“Professional developments are more just refreshers of things that I'm already doing and
not necessarily new things or anything that I can take back right away and implement in
the classroom. So, it's just things that are not as useful as I would hope they would be.”
The participants’ readiness for something new was mostly a function of believing they
had mastered many of the competencies needed for the classroom, but not those aspects
of educator practice that they believed would have a wider impact on their professional
skills. The professional skills that they alluded to are similar to elements of Sykes and
Wilson’s (2015) Professional Role competencies and will be explored in greater detail
later in this chapter.

What most participants stated was that the professional development they engaged
in at this point in their careers just wasn’t adequately specialized for their situations and
didn’t speak to their level of competency. This was not always the case, however, as
some participants did speak about a handful of effective professional development
activities which they experienced earlier in their careers. Debbie described some past
work in understanding student learning styles as “inspiring...it was integrated into my
practice immediately.” James spoke about a how observing other veteran teachers when he was starting out was “super impactful to me personally...having the opportunity to see others teach and how to try some of their things out.” However, what clearly came from the interviews was that TPD at this point in their careers had lost its impact. Lara summed this up by saying, “I often feel that the opportunities [professional development] afforded to me by the district were -- they fall short as far as my needs go.” Augusta shared a similar feeling, “...it takes a lot of hours to put together an adult professional development that's really valuable. So, it just gets that slapped together kind of feeling...it misses the mark.” Traditional professional development had lost its ability to speak to what these educators felt that they needed to learn at this point in their careers. While seven of the 15 participants were able to reflect positively on some of the past TPD experiences provided by their districts, each of the same seven participants felt that at this later point in their careers, the TPD, in general, no longer supported their development as professionals.

Mainly, the participants expressed that they were looking for, as Brittney, Lara and Augusta shared above, learning opportunities that would take into consideration their experience and proficiency level as educators. They hoped for a broader picture of educational competency beyond pedagogy and specific discipline content. According to many, the learning from most district-wide professional development just didn’t feel actionable or applicable at this point in their career arcs and lacked any semblance of differentiation. While TPD may have been more effective earlier in their careers when basic competencies were being practiced and expanded upon or they were still developing their professional identities, many expressed growing bored by the top-down,
one-size fits all approach to professional development and expressed feeling frustrated by it. However, when asked about the learning and experiences associated with administrative certification programs, participants expressed that the program provided engaging, actionable learning which incorporated active learning strategies where each had to practice the tasks and competencies targeted in each course during their professional workdays. Participants generally reported, save for a few instances in their careers, that traditional professional development rarely had had this explicit requirement to fit learning into their daily practice. Additionally, the opportunity to choose this learning, rather than have it dictated to them created, as Lilly put it, an “investment” on the part of the individual to engage the materials and use what was being taught.

A majority of the participants noted that a graduate course model, as opposed to traditional professional development, was something that they felt was highly conducive to learning at this point in their careers. Nearly all (13 of 15) participants articulated that the self-directed nature of the administrative certification programs made the work more meaningful. By “self-directed,” the participants generally noted that they had autonomy in selecting their program and that they recognized it was their responsibility to meet the expectations of their chosen programs. In other words, it was not a requirement from their employer, but rather something that each sought for their own self-improvement. This was something that many of the participants noted in contrast to traditional in-service professional development where there is little teacher autonomy or agency in the offerings provided. Alexis spoke about the impact of having the opportunity to choose her previous professional learning this way, “When I had the chance, I would say that PD
that I found on my own through classes beat anything my school district offered. Because of the fact that you had that choice, I did my best to take away what I could.”

Additionally, most of the participants reported that there was very little or no differentiated, applicable professional development in their school systems where all teachers, regardless of discipline or experience, received the same or similar types of program. Giulia described her sense of frustration with the district-led TPD not being applicable to her daily practice, “Most of them [PDs] are not helpful... I'm learning...but it has nothing to do with my subject material.” A number of participants shared this same sentiment. In-service TPD earlier in their careers had been focused on developing what Christine described as “the PD learning was there so we could all be on the same level,” but what had become clear was that the district appeared unable to differentiate once that “level” had been obtained by the experienced teachers.

Another interesting finding was that a few of the participants reported that the costs associated with the administrative certification program and requirement to produce meaningful work through structured assignments and deadlines motivated each to engage the material with considerably more thoughtful and focused energy than traditional district-wide professional development. There was a level of accountability, that only a few participants expressed having experienced in past TPD. Most of the participants described their in-service professional development experiences as almost the opposite of this with work and expectations that required marginal effort and engagement. For many, traditional in-service professional development responsibilities had become a series of almost automatic responses to end-of-program exit evaluations that didn’t engage them beyond the motivation to be done for the day. By choosing to enroll in an administrative
certification program and having to pay at least a portion of it, each of the participants felt highly motivated to engage the material with greater focus and desire to produce higher quality work than would generally be produced in building based, traditional professional development.

When I asked the focus group how often they were expected to use the skills and competencies purported to be developed by district-provided professional development, the general belief was that districts were interested, mostly, in filling the time with relevant material, but had little in the way of measuring or ensuring that the learning was put into action. Many reported that they were certainly expected to use the learning, but because much of it wasn’t relevant to their practice, it was unclear how to do so. Only a few participants in the study were able to note some examples from their careers where professional development resulted in a change in their practice. However, in only one case, James, was there a mention of a program (Capturing Kids Hearts) that there was the expectation to apply the training in their classrooms and that there was accountability in teacher evaluations to ensure that the training was being put into practice.

Additionally, the fact that there were courses that had assignments, taught by skilled instructors that included peer groups requiring individual and group work to be completed promptly, fostered a sense of mutual accountability. Not doing one’s work would be tantamount to letting down both their peers and professors. The personal choice to pursue the program and the expense of each course added to this idea of being “accountable.” This accountability was something that was spontaneously mentioned in a number of the participants’ explanations about the meaningfulness of the learning they derived from the administrative certification programs. The professors provided expert
coaching and feedback on topics, and the teachers would, in turn, collaborate with their peers to produce evidence of having learned the material that was presented.

The administrative certification program truly represented a change for many participants from both the learning that took place in their teacher preparation programs and the in-service professional development activities they have had through the years in that it was new, voluntary, sustained, and challenging. Seeking something more than content knowledge or pedagogical skills, the participants hoped to impact their professional practice by learning how to coach teachers, organize school-wide initiatives, and strengthen communication between teachers and administration. The accountability built into the coursework and activities, the applicability to their professional practice, the alignment to their differentiated learning needs at a point in their careers, and the autonomy to pursue what they believed to be meaningful at a point in their careers were all encompassed in the administrative certification programs. The structure and activities associated with these programs allowed the teachers to investigate more deeply and practice new skills in a way that each individual described as some of the most meaningful and practice altering learning of their careers.

**Important content learning.** The majority of participants noted that as a result of the assignments, activities, and experiences associated with earning an administrative certification, the most significant new content learning occurred in the areas of school law, school finance, human resources, educational policy, community relations, leadership skills, and organizational management. In looking at the motivations that the participants expressed for enrolling into an administrative program, it seems reasonable to conclude that with “Desire to influence the organization” being mentioned by 13 of 15
participants, that the type of learning they hoped to gain would extend beyond classroom duties and instructional practice. All of the learning from the administrative coursework didn’t explicitly fall within Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) two domains of teacher competency. In fact, all of the learning that did align with Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) framework fell in the Professional Role Responsibility domain. The following list highlights the learning from the administrative certification coursework that a majority of the participants felt was new and added to their competencies. The learning that aligned with Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) Professional Role Responsibility domain is presented in bold:

- **School law: Meeting legal responsibilities**
- School finance: Not specifically noted in either of the domains
- Human resources: Not specifically noted in either of the domains
- **Community relations: Working with families and communities**
- **Organizational management: Collaborating with other professionals**
- **Leadership skills: Collaborating with other professionals**

  Parker, Brittney, Lara, Augusta, and Tracy all explicitly mentioned experiences within their programs where study of the law was beneficial. Brittney explained how her understanding of the law evolved as a result of her coursework, “I mean I knew some law from before. I knew what I was supposed to be doing. I don't know them [laws] specifically, but I learned a lot more of them...that it's [the law] not a black or white area. It's so gray in education, so you have to be very careful about making your decisions.”

When the participants spoke about their teacher preparation experiences, many noted having taken a law class, but they also regarded that class as a general overview that each
found difficult to relate to teaching, having had little to no experience on which to draw upon. Early law classes focused on the right and wrong of certain actions by students and school administrators, tended to present the law in absolutes, and it was difficult to question the contexts and how they might impact how laws could be interpreted or applied. Participants expressed that the administrative certification coursework and activities exposed them to a much broader set of school related legal issues. But beyond that, having had classroom experiences to draw upon while investigating those legal issues provided a context in which to fully explore how the laws could be applied based on the individual fact patterns of the cases.

In nearly 15 years of administrative experience, I can agree that without understanding the full context of a given legal question that is posed, it would be almost impossible to apply the law in a fair and appropriate manner adequately. Administrators must weigh the nuances of a particular event and the contextual actions of those involved. Novice educators tend to find this difficult; thus, their understanding of the law has a fundamental limitation. As experienced educators, learning the law with the ability to draw upon context and the uniqueness of each event primes administratively trained teachers to recognize how an understanding of law at this point in their career can be valuable to their practice. Meeting legal responsibilities as an educator cannot be fully accomplished with a cursory understanding of law or by relying on other individuals to interpret the law correctly for you. As Augusta explained, “It [Law] gave me a better understanding of what my principal was able to do...it made me conscious of what he needed me to do in order to support my students.”
I chose to address school finance and human resources together because they are not listed explicitly as Professional Role Responsibilities in Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) domains. Anne, Alexis, Christine, Giulia, and Lilly each articulated that these two areas of learning were something they had never considered important up to entering an administrative certification program. In the case of human resources, Christine noted that “the impact of hiring can be profound,” referring to staff diversity and was a realization that she had not considered prior to her administrative coursework. Additionally, Giulia spoke about the Danielson Framework for Teaching and how working with struggling teachers on improvement plans was something that she had never realized that human resources was involved with (Danielson, 2016). She had always believed that it was the principal who made all of the decisions around which staff was placed on improvement plans. Both Christine and Giulia explained that they had never understood how district office was involved in staff management and this “opened their eyes” to how their organizations functioned.

Anne spoke about the importance of understanding school finance and how, “School finance one, you have to know it...You have to have an understanding of where your money is going...Having an understanding of finance and how our crazy educational budget is contrived in the first place.” She placed this idea in the context of recognizing why certain decisions were made regarding staffing and materials allocations. Anne believed that teachers who didn’t recognize where the money came from didn’t have a true sense of who they worked for. In her eyes, teachers believed they worked for a principal and superintendent but didn’t recognize that taxpayers were, in fact, their true employers. Alexis spoke about how decisions around finances are not transparent to
teachers, but they can be if a teacher takes the time to read and understand the budget. Having this knowledge, Lilly mentioned, “helps one to understand why decisions are made,” which is not only critical in terms of teacher learning, but also may suggest how this learning can impact or change a teacher’s view about the organization in which they work, or the condition of public education as a whole, something I intend to explore later in this chapter.

A number of participants expressed learning skills and developing competencies in areas that directly align to the Professional Role Responsibilities domain of Sykes and Wilson (2015), specifically, Working with families and communities and Collaborating with other professionals. Eleven of fifteen participants spoke about how the administrative coursework and practicums allowed them to design programs that connected their schools to the broader communities that they served. According to Sykes and Wilson (2015), Working with families and communities focuses on teachers developing a sense of the community culture and striving to identify learning resources that both connect the community to the school and that the school can identify as existing within the community in which a deeper connection can be forged. Additionally, a focus on enhancing communication between the school and the community is a core principle of this domain. The administrative practicums for Garrett, James, Carmen, Parker, and Debbie required that they organize both in school and community outreach programs to strengthen ties between the school and families. Carmen spoke about the impact of this: “I think it was creating positive relationships with people, and with teachers, and with community stakeholders, and parents.” Garrett spoke about how his work in the community allowed him to gather the type of data that helped him alter his program to
serve the needs of his students better: “[Having] familiarity with the neighborhood you're in...I now see trends where certain students from certain backgrounds cannot afford to purchase certain instruments, or because of that, they end up dropping out of the [music] program quickly.” Garrett’s outreach into the community helped him realize which neighborhoods needed more support to take part in his music program. Garrett shared that he would never have looked at the communities around his school in the manner in which he did without the tools provided from his coursework. The result of this work has had a profound impact on his music program.

A majority (12 of 15) of the participants expressed the subdomain of Collaborating with professionals as being a competency that was developed as a result of the learning experiences they engaged in during their administrative certification program. This Sykes and Wilson (2015) subdomain holds that teachers must engage with other teachers in their work environments to be effective. Schools today, in most cases, are co-constructed by teachers and administrators to allow for routines such as common planning of assessments, sharing data across grades and content areas, sharing effective classroom management strategies, and sharing instructional expertise, to name just a few. Regular communication and participation in learning teams are basic expectations in today’s school settings. However, all five members of the focus group spoke about how little work was done in teacher preparation in developing the necessary skills to collaborate effectively. Additionally, although the focus group expressed that many of the in-service professional development experiences in the past required teachers to collaborate, they failed to develop the skills necessary for how to better facilitate and
develop a collaborative sense among the teachers. Collaboration was expected but was never taught.

Alexis spoke about a breakthrough moment with her colleagues regarding collaboration while completing an assignment from one of her administrative courses, “It was definitely-- made me feel really good about myself, really positive about myself, that I was offering information to people outside my classroom, that I was having more discussions. It kind of opened the doors to staff members that I might not normally talk to.” Tracy, who used the term “teaching principal” to describe her role in the school, also shared the realization that the learning from her coursework led her to look for more opportunities to collaborate as a team. Anne, in regards to how the staff has changed as a result of her leadership, mentioned, “By us collaborating better, the learning for the kids gets better.” The fact that 12 participants spoke about learning how to collaborate, and that the collective experience of the administrative program explicitly taught them skills and gave them targeted, structured activities in which collaboration was fostered, is a critical finding.

The final element of learning that teachers in administrative programs reported as being valuable was developing leadership skills. While this seems evident in that each of the participants had been seeking to become a leader, the fact that all 15 participants were able to give numerous examples of what they learned about developing leadership skills is critical. Within Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) Collaborating with other professionals subdomain is a competency that is referred to as exercising leadership both formally and informally. Sykes and Wilson (2015) believe that teachers engaging in school-wide
decision-making and the active support of fellow educators is a critical competency that
develops as a result of experience. They state that,

All teachers exercise some leadership in relation to some matters at some times of the year and at certain phases of their careers. As teachers gain experience and expertise, they progressively take on leadership responsibilities. This can be done formally, as when a teacher agrees to chair an important committee, or informally when a teacher provides expert guidance to a working group within the school. (Sykes & Wilson, 2015, p. 83)

If exercising leadership is indeed a critical aspect of all teachers’ practice, then the question of developing those competencies is of great importance. For teachers to engage in school-wide decision-making and offer programmatic guidance, it stands to reason that experience itself may not be enough to prepare a teacher to engage in those critical shared leadership activities.

Lilly spoke about one of her leadership moments this way,

I have a colleague that has been a teacher for 30 years, and she's a really great special ed. teacher. But sometimes she struggles in meetings. And often I'm in a meeting with her because I teach a lot of the kids that she has, so she'll generally invite me to her meetings. And not that I'm acting as the LEA, but I can kind of steer things in a way that the LEA would want it without bringing attention to the fact that maybe this meeting wasn't going the way it should have been going.

For Lilly, this was a leadership moment that she expressed could not have occurred before obtaining her administrative certification. On the one hand, she revealed that it was the confidence she gleaned from the program and the practicum work, especially, that helped her handle this situation, but she also noted feeling comfortable advocating because she knew her principal trusted her as a result of her training.

James, who now serves as a department coordinator, shared how he has stepped into a leadership role with confidence as a result of earning his certification, “Everyone kind of looked to me to take over [the department] ...I’ve seen some real growth in my
department, and that kind of led me to think that maybe I could do this...where the impact will be greater.” Additionally, Debbie shared a similar feeling of growing skills as a leader, “So on the team that I've been part of, I kind of evolved as-- I don't know what to say, captain of the team.” Both James and Debbie began to exercise leadership in much the same was as Lilly did. They each felt the confidence of their administration to lead, and thus, as teachers, were able to develop their teammates and help them achieve more productive outcomes.

Carmen spoke about how colleagues identified in her the skills of a leader and how other teachers would tell her, “‘Oh, you have really good leadership skills,’ or ‘You have a nice way of creating relationships with people to lead them.’” These comments were profound because Carmen reported that she hadn’t thought about her competencies as necessarily being examples of leadership. She explained to me that what she felt she had gained was confidence and a comfort with interacting with other teachers, but was the teachers that interpreted her actions as being demonstrative of leadership. Additionally, Christine learned to demonstrate leadership with her peers: “The younger teachers will and some older teachers will come to me for feedback on new labs they've typed up, or we'll work on something (together) to edit or fix or something like that.”

In many cases, participants recognized through the eyes of their colleagues that they had become leaders. Having obtained administrative certification gave them a new skill set to both lead formally, as department coordinators, stand-in LEAs in special education meetings, and informally, through peers requesting assistance and support; were able to engage in building leadership. On the surface, it seems obvious that a leadership program should develop leadership competencies. However, the fact that none
of the participants have achieved school-level, formal leadership positions might cause some to question if the outcomes were worth the effort and expense in obtaining the certification. When asked if the program, time, the cost was worth it, all fifteen participants believed that the learning was extremely valuable; and to a person, each felt that they developed the confidence to take on leadership roles that they would not have before earning the certification. The learning obtained by studying school law, school finance, human resources, community relations, and organizational management helped make them feel more professional as teachers. This learning also caused others within their building to look to them for support and advice.

**Empathy for leadership and decision-making processes.** One of the most fascinating themes that developed from analysis of the interviews was that the participants in the administrative programs began to develop more than just an understanding of what their principals and assistant principals did. Two-thirds of the participants consistently reported ideas that seemed to extend beyond an understanding of building leaders’ actions taken to address something that wasn’t working well in the school or decisions made around allocating resources. Many described having developed more of an understanding of why decisions were made, the thinking behind certain decisions, and the emotional considerations and toll that those decisions took on their leaders. More than a realization of how hard it can be to be a leader in terms of long days and longer school years, the most significant piece of learning that the participants felt they took away from the administrative certification program, and their practicums especially, was that they experienced in a small way what it was like to shoulder the burden of leadership and to understand the highs and lows of that on a daily basis.
Parker spoke about what he had thought about his principal before and after the administrative certification program, “I was just kind of like, ‘Why don't they have more time to do certain things?’ And I could kind of see -- I got a sense that it's really out of her hands. There were things that she was being asked to do that she really wanted nothing to do with, but she had no control over, so I kind of felt for her in some ways.” He went on to explain how this realization impacted him, “I got a better understanding of what the principal's dealing with on a daily basis, and I was kind of overwhelmed at how much that they really are doing that I wasn't aware of.” He summed it up by stating the administrative coursework opened his eyes up in a way that his previous experience didn’t provide.

Carmen expressed having empathy for her principal as a result of her training this way, “…it's a mutual respect type thing where I know they have to make decisions, they have to lead, and they're in that position, and we have to follow. And again, like I said, there's times I don't always agree with them, but I can see both sides of where they're coming from.” Carmen’s seeing both sides was something that she said was new for her. Although she explained that she had always felt that she could see both sides and was “fair” to the administrative side, the administrative program opened her eyes, especially to the things that she didn’t always agree with (e.g., the benefits of making objectives in lessons explicit to students). Debbie realized, as well, that as a result of her practicum, she developed a unique understanding of good teachers, through the eyes of administrators, “It makes you aware of the roles of an administrator, and it makes you appreciate a teacher who is following through doing his or her job and then how it helps them with what they need.”
Garrett appreciated the ability to see beyond his own pre-program bias that administrators seemed to discount ideas that a teacher in the moment feels is of great importance,

...when you start to realize that whatever your concern of the day is that you bring to them, that might be one of the most important things to you, but that's the thousandth concern they've dealt with that day. So even when they respond to you in a very quick way, it's not smug. It's, ‘I have 900 other people to respond to. I'm going to take care of you. Now I've got to move on.’

Christine expanded on this idea of being in the head of leadership,

I would definitely say it changes the way that I do things, for sure. I think before, as a teacher, not having that administration perspective, I'd be like, ‘Oh, why are they doing this? Why are they making this decision? Our kids are going to miss this lesson.’ And now that I've had administrative experience, I kind of go, ‘Well, if they did it this way, then it would affect this, this, this, and this.’ So, it gives me a better understanding of why administrators make the decisions they do.

Alexis, Lara, Anne, Augusta, and Tracy all expressed similar instances where they acknowledged that their past teaching experience got them only so close to understanding truly what it meant to be a leader. They couldn’t take that final step of feeling and sharing in all that must be weighed into making decisions that impact the individuals that you are leading, whether they are teachers, students, or parents. To be truly empathetic towards a leader requires a maturity to step outside one’s motives and needs and inside the shoes of those who are making the decisions that will impact others. The majority of the participants spoke about how the opportunity to work closely with their administrators helped develop this ability and feel those thousands of voices that administrators hear when they consider a decision. Each felt this learning was one of the most critical outcomes of the whole administrative certification program.
In undertaking this study and addressing the question, *what do teachers who have administrative certification describe learning from their administrative certification programs*, I began with the elements of Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) framework. I was operating under with the premise that the educators would express that the learning obtained from the program would have a direct impact on student achievement. Additionally, I believed that the competencies developed by the learning would be spread among seven of the nine subdomains within the two primary domains, Instructional and Professional Role Responsibilities:

- Preparing and planning for high quality instruction:
  - Promoting community participation as opportunity to explore core values
  - Setting long- and short-range learning goals and objectives
  - Selecting and adapting resources for use in instruction
- Establishing and maintaining the social and academic culture
  - Managing the physical and material environment
  - Managing instructional groupings
- Engaging in instructional improvement
  - Engaging in deliberate practice
- Collaborating with other professionals
  - Exercising leadership, both formally and informally
- Working with families and communities
  - Using family- and community-related information as a resource for learning
- Fulfilling ethical responsibilities
  - Responding to ethical dilemmas with sound reasoning and actions
• Meeting legal responsibilities
  
  o Complying with all relevant laws and regulations

As noted above, only a handful of the 15 participants expressed any connection between student achievement and the learning they engaged in to earn their administrative certification. Although I had thought I would find more examples of learning that fell within the above subdomains as a result of their administrative program, there were other significant findings that could serve as the basis for further research into the development of impactful, differentiated professional development, not to mention provide some guidance about how better to prepare educators for the field.

The learning most consistently reported by the participants fell in the three major Sykes and Wilson subdomains: Collaborating with other professionals, Working with families and communities, and Meeting legal responsibilities. Specifically, the participants expressed numerous examples of working with colleagues to further enhance the organization and embracing formal and informal leadership roles within their buildings and departments. The majority of the participants expressed learning about and thus having a new appreciation for, the part that school law takes in their practice and how an understanding of the law can better serve students, colleagues, and the community. A number of participants spoke about the opportunity to interact with the community in new ways that further enhanced communication and community ties. While this undoubtedly has an impact on instructional competencies because of the importance of the home and school connection for student learning, the teachers I interviewed spoke primarily about how it impacted their confidence in speaking with
parents and provided a shift in thinking about how communication with parents can further relationships.

**Reported Impact on Teaching and Professional Life**

I initially wanted to investigate the impact of administrative certification programs on teaching competency; however, as I became more familiar with the research on teacher preparation and professional development, I became more interested in exploring any type of impact through teachers’ eyes. As mentioned previously, this study utilizes a phenomenological and hermeneutic orientation. Moustakas (1994) and Nakkula and Ravitch (1998) describe a phenomenological and hermeneutic orientation as one which frames and considers how individuals interpret and make meaning of the world in ways that are individualized and contextualized. As the participants reflected on their program experiences and had the opportunity to make meaning of its impact, they made it clear that more than new learning occurred. On the most basic level, this learning impacted their relationships with others within their buildings, as detailed in the previous sections. But on a deeper and more transformative level, this new learning facilitated a profound shift in how each defined their roles as educators moving forward in their careers. In general, the participants expressed that the learning from the administrative programs impacted their teaching and professional lives in four areas:

- The development of new relationships with colleagues
- The development of new relationships with administrators
- The development of a new sense of connectedness to teaching and their organization
The development of an increased perceived self-efficacy

**Relationship with colleagues.** One of the most intriguing areas where participants felt meaningful change as a result of having obtained administrative certification was in their relationships with colleagues. As I noted earlier in this chapter, participants felt that they had new opportunities to exercise both formal and informal leadership with a variety of stakeholders, but most frequently with their peers. Additionally, many expressed that what they learned in their programs gave them the confidence to lead, mentor, and support staff in a way that they did not feel as secure doing prior to earning their administrative certification. A majority (12 of 15) of the fifteen participants reported that they both developed new relationships within the building and strengthened existing ones. The resulting knowledge and cumulative effect of an administrative certification program on participants profoundly altered relationships with colleagues, which, in turn, participants reported positively impacted their schools’ cultures.

A common element of administrative certification programs in the United States is the requirement that aspiring administrators take part in an administrative practicum. Similar to the approximation experiences of pre-service teachers noted in Grossman et al. (2009), would-be administrators must engage in the activities of an administrator for a number of prescribed hours to earn their certification (the number of hours varies from state to state). A majority of the participants in this study spoke about how their

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3 The term “perceived self-efficacy” is generally attributed to Albert Bandura’s research. However, in research done by others related to Bandura’s work, especially in the field of teacher efficacy, the term “perceived” is dropped and is referred to as “self-efficacy.”
practicums allowed them to lead building initiatives with other staff members. The initiatives undertaken by each participant varied. However, regardless of the activity, participants pointed towards their administrative practicums as providing unique opportunities to guide and support staff in their respective buildings. Participants believed that more meaningful relationships with colleagues were formed as a direct result of taking part in the administrative practicum. Alexis spoke about this when she said,

It definitely... made me feel really good about myself, really positive about myself, that I was offering information to people outside my classroom, that I was having more discussions. It kind of opened the doors to staff members that I might not normally talk to.

This sentiment was shared by a majority of the participants and helped, in turn, develop confidence in themselves as educators. It’s important to note that when pressed about how that confidence translated into particular actions or examples of specific skill development, participants, including members of the focus group, found it difficult to share specifics. During their practicums, participants were expected to interact with teachers outside of their regular routines. This essentially created connections with individuals that, as many of the participants reported, were not necessarily fostered by the traditional professional associations within a building.

This initial change in role has a longer-term effect in that in forging these new relationships, many of the participants felt as though they now had a responsibility to develop and nurture them. In turn, participants believed that colleagues across the building saw them as pseudo-administrators (e.g., leading departments, organizing school-wide activities). Most participants, as Alexis noted earlier, felt that their
colleagues began to reach out and turn to them for support, mentorship, and resources.

Augusta shared how her opportunity to serve on interview committees during her practicum gave her insights into what administrators were looking for in candidates. Colleagues that Augusta never interacted with prior to earning an administrative certification sought her assistance when preparing for interviews:

So, I've been able, through my internships, to sit on some interviews. And now I feel like, on the other end, we've got people in the building looking for jobs. And they'll come to me, and they'll say, ‘Well, what are administrators looking for?’ And I'm able to say these are the things... I feel more like an advisor to people. And people will come to me and ask me things like, "Oh, you went to principal school. How should I do this thing or answer that thing?"

There was a clear feeling across the twelve participants that colleagues viewed and related to them in a manner that made them feel regarded in a positive light and respected more because of the knowledge they now had about teaching and the organization.

This did not mean, however, that their colleagues saw the participants as direct supervisors. Participants reported a comfort among the staff that led to increased interactions with staff and many of the participants stated that both novice and veteran teachers began to reach out to them with a greater frequency than prior to entering the program. Participants attributed this change to the fact that, as colleagues, rather than as supervisors, there was no fear that asking for help or support may come with negative consequences. These administratively trained teachers, I believe, became instructional leaders in the eyes of their peers.

In my experience, when principals are referred to as instructional leaders, this tends to mean they serve as both the operational managers of the building and as teacher coaches focused on the support of quality instructional practice. However, the
management of the building sometimes can take time away from instructional coaching, and supervision requires evaluations, which can occasionally lead to strained relationships or perhaps even formal discipline. This fact is not lost on teachers, and, regardless of how positive the relationship between staff and their principal, I have found that there is always a little tension between the necessity to manage personnel and the desire to develop and support great teaching. In the case of the participants in this study, the majority reported that they became, for their colleagues, peers with knowledge and insights about teaching that typical teachers didn’t possess, not even, in some cases, the veteran ones. Even though the participants, for the most part, didn’t explicitly report developing additional instructional skills as a result of the administrative certification program, it was the resulting boost in confidence or increased perceived self-efficacy, which will be discussed later in this chapter, that may explain this newly established connection with staff.

The teachers who possessed administrative certifications became instructional leaders in that they could provide resources and guidance to struggling teachers who sought out their advice. In doing so willingly, without any of the fear that comes with exposing a weakness or lack of confidence, colleagues were able to seek feedback and coaching safely. This perceived safety that colleagues felt with each other provided additional opportunities for struggling teachers to get coaching and guidance.

A vital offshoot of the pseudo-administrative support that participants can provide in a supportive manner was that administrators now had more time to focus on other job responsibilities. According to the participants, a new level of instructional and operational support was created by having teachers who could view situations through an
administrative lens. Additionally, these administratively certified teachers now had insight into the broader context of teaching (i.e., not just instructional responsibilities), so they were able to assist not only with instructional support but also with any number of the areas that participants felt more apt to support as a result of their new learning.

A number of participants expressed the value of these new relationships and the impact they now had within their buildings. Lilly shared that the administrative program, “...helped me be a better teacher. I think it's helped me be a better colleague especially in special ed. where we're always bouncing ideas off of each other, and trying to make things work, and doing what we can for kids.” She went on to share in this dialog with me:

Lilly: I do have people ask me my advice on a lot of things, much more than before.

Interviewer: Do you think that they [administration] know that you're a go-to person for your colleagues?

Lilly: Absolutely. They told me that.

Interviewer: So, how does that impact your relationship with them?

Lilly: I have a great relationship with my admin and colleagues. Better than before.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel.

Lilly: Like what I do matters. All the time.

This exchange demonstrates the impact of having forged a new relationship with colleagues and her administration, an idea I plan to explore in the next section.

Newman expressed a similar sense that his relationship with colleagues had changed, even with those that he was close to before entering an administrative program.
He stated, “I feel like they're asking me more questions now. And they say, ‘From your administrative perspective—' like I'm already an administrator. And these are some friends that have been teaching much longer than I have; they never asked me questions like this before.” Newman expressed the sense that his training made him approachable. The fact that veteran teachers reached out to him more with practitioner questions told him that he was viewed in a different light now having received the administrative certification. He expressed to me that this made him more mindful of his actions and thoughtful when around peers. His new relationship with colleagues established himself as a role model and resource.

Brittney also talked about how her relationships changed in her building. She said that “(colleagues)...knowing I was working towards my administrative certification, they would come up to me and just ask for advice of how to work with a student, or how to approach their class about something.” She went on to say, “I definitely think it's changed my relationships for the better...they view me as more of a leader...the comments they make to me and the questions they ask.” Brittney shared with me that she felt more relied upon within the building by her peers. There is a sense here of not only a changing in relationships with colleagues but also how the new learning reframed how she saw teaching and her role within it. The profession was no longer just about the classroom and her students. Having the administrative certification resulted in her finding a way to have a broader impact on the organization, something that she had initially sought when applying to earn her administrative certification.

For 12 out of 15 participants, the change in relationship with colleagues had a profound impact on them as educators. Many expressed that they felt the confidence to
coach and support friends and colleagues within the building in areas that they would have never crossed into before being trained as administrators. Each of the twelve participants felt that they had a high level of competency as teachers prior to entering administrative certification programs; however, as a result of the learning and experiences they took from the administrative program, each felt they developed a new level of confidence that led them to reach out to support a broader group of peers. Additionally, it appears that peers perceived the teachers with administrative certification as having new skillsets that could help them develop their own. In both cases, the supports provided to colleagues through these new relationships had a profound impact on the participants in this study. It made them feel that their work was valued and this, in turn, pushed them to think about their practice as teachers and leaders.

**Relationship with administrators.** Eleven out of fifteen participants felt that the ability to work closely with administrators during their practicums was transformational. Having the opportunity to engage in leadership activities and work closely with building- and district-level decision-makers had a tremendous impact on the professional lives of the individuals in this study. Many of the participants expressed that being able to forge a relationship with their administrator allowed them to develop a sort of “common mind,” as one participant, Lara, put it. The “common mind” that she described was essentially a connection between what teachers were experiencing in their daily practice and what administrators were seeking to accomplish in their roles. Lara described the impacts of her new relationship with administration as, “...it's a specific type of change where it's almost sharing a common mind with me, so you're communicating better, you're
connecting better. And that’s making you think about how to do things better.” Tracy shared this example of her new relationship with her principal,

I have a better understanding of why they [admin] do the things they do or why they say the things that they say... I can't think of one specific example, but now I get it. It is all about student achievement. … I always thought, ‘Okay. My kids are learning. My kids are doing well.’ But now I see how all of the kids have to do well.

Because of the practicum relationship that the administrators had with their interns, many of the participants felt that administrators worked closely with them to co-author strategies to improve what was seen as lacking in the building. When a teacher and principal are on the same page, the participants believed this creates a synergy that improves student achievement and increases teacher morale. Many felt that this insight and connection with building leaders would not have been forged had they remained as classroom teachers. Three participants, Augusta, Parker, and Christine, mentioned that they had opportunities to work with their administrators on school-wide initiatives in the past; however, their experiences were described as more top-down directed rather than collaborative and co-constructed.

The development of relationships with administrators helped participants grow the confidence to adopt leadership roles within the building. This directly links back to earlier findings in this chapter where participants learned to exhibit formal and informal leadership within the building. Giulia, as a result of the program, talked about how she began to see herself as “more of an equal” with her principal, resulting in a boost in her confidence to accept a role as a department coordinator. For the participants, viewing themselves in the role of pseudo-administrators, but not supervisors, allowed each of them to extend offers of support to staff which they believe made staff more ready and
willing to accept coaching, feedback, or advice. In my experience, the certainty that there are well-trained teachers who have an administrative perspective is an invaluable resource in a building.

The participants expressed that a unique connection with their principals/assistant-principals was created that impacted how they viewed the role of administration and how administrators viewed them as teachers. In being both teachers and administrative interns, a majority of the participants believed that they had created a trust within the organization that had not existed prior to their practicum experiences. It was felt by many that that trust translated into a greater willingness to extend themselves in taking risks instructionally and take on responsibilities outside of the classroom to help the organization thrive. Augusta shared this example as to how her relationship with administration evolved, giving her more ability to influence her organization, which had been one of her motivations for entering into an administrative certification program:

It has changed the way my current administrator views me because he sees me more in a leadership role. And he is looking for ways to help me gain experience because he knows that down the road, I'll be looking for positions. So, he's invited me to be part of the core team here at school, which I hadn't been before. He has invited me to be the building program leader; I think because he knows I'm really interested in taking on more.

In addition, Parker explained how his relationship grew with his administrator resulting in his having new opportunities to provide input into certain decisions that were being made within the building. As he explained, “...having finished this program and spent a lot of time with my school's principal, and just feeling more comfortable with what's being talked out and how things are being run. I got to offer input...felt more comfortable giving input.” When Parker was pressed for examples on the types of input he was able
to provide with his new found confidence, he spoke mostly about opportunities to weigh in on “the direction of his department,” and “new professional development initiatives.”

Since most of the participants felt that their skills were sound instructionally, even before entering into an administrative certification program, it was interesting to hear how the new relationships with administrators led, in some cases, to a reported expansion of their instructional repertoire and competency. The most commonly cited examples of this change were that many of the participants felt they knew what the principal was looking for in terms of instructional practice, student engagement, and parent communication. Participants felt empowered to experiment instructionally in the classroom and step outside their “comfort zones,” as Brittny put it. She described a time where she experimented with a flexible grouping strategy. As a result of the trust she developed with her principal during the practicum, the fears she would have once felt experimenting with this type of grouping strategy were now replaced with the desire to challenge herself.

The relationships that were forged as a result of working in close proximity with their administrators during their practicums were considered by many to be one of the most important outcomes from the administrative certification experience. Not only did many of the participants develop personal relationships with their administrators, but those relationships and the trust that was forged as a result of them laid the groundwork for new, challenging, and rewarding professional experiences.

**Connectedness to the organization.** Many participants shared that when they enrolled in their administrative programs, they believed that there was the very real possibility that they may have to leave their respective districts in order to obtain a
leadership position. For some, they stated that they had grown weary of where they worked and sought new experiences. In other cases, the prospect of continuing in the classroom was something that was beginning to wear on the teachers, and their thoughts started to turn towards either moving into administration or transitioning out of teaching entirely. It appeared to me that what some participants were guardedly sharing was that they had begun to feel a growing disconnect between the educator they thought they could become and the place in which they worked. Furthermore, for a few of the participants, this disconnect went even deeper as they had started to question for the first time if the impact they were having as teachers wasn’t quite as fulfilling and challenging in the same ways it had been when they had entered the profession. Augusta shared that for her, leaving her current school was a very strong consideration because she felt stymied and “uninspired” by her experiences as a teacher leading up to entering her program. She described this feeling like, “Well, I'm kind of stuck under the thumb of this situation. So, I'm going to go to school and figure out how maybe I could do this better, perhaps somewhere else.” The need for something new in their lives had become very necessary, and many believed that this need might be fulfilled by training to become an administrator. Even for those participants who reported that they had hoped to influence the organization by learning to become an administrator, it seemed to me that this idea was more about having greater influence in an organization and not necessarily on the one in which they were working.

The idea that earning an administrative certification could lead to subsequently leaving the district or would provide motivation to leave their current district relates back to an idea raised earlier in the rationale section of Chapter 1 where it was discussed that
some School Boards choose not to financially support teachers obtaining administrative certification because it could lead to individuals leaving the district. Fewer than half of the participants in this study received partial financial support from their districts for their administrative certification programs. The rest of the participants didn’t receive any financial support from their districts. The expense of hiring, developing, and maintaining a quality staff is significant; therefore, the idea of providing training that could result in higher attrition or turnover would seem to be cost prohibitive. However, what if that paradigm could be flipped upside down and the impact of earning administrative certification had the opposite effect? What if training to be an administrator not only led to teachers being retained at a higher rate than traditional teacher retention rates within a district, but also resulted in teachers feeling more committed to the organization and their teaching? Augusta’s feelings about having earned an administrative certification illustrates nicely how it can impact a teacher: “I definitely feel more content in the fact that I understand more of some of the stuff that used to frustrate me before. I found a place in all that.”

As a result of earning an administrative certification, nearly all of the participants (13 out of 15) reported feeling more connected to their organizations and more committed to their work in the organization. This was an unexpected finding but supports the conceptual framework for this study linking the value of effective professional development to the potential improvement of teaching competencies. The most impactful learning is the type of experience that aligns what is being taught with how it can be applied in daily practice. Participants felt that their administrative certification program was predicated on the belief that they must work closely with colleagues at all levels of
the organization. They had to learn about their organizations in ways that traditional teacher preparation or in-service professional development never asked of them. From class assignments to practicum experiences, the administrative program required the participants to “look under the hood,” as one participant said, of their organization. The result of this intensive investigation of their own organization was a new found respect for the work being done within it. The programs asked participants to:

- Build off of their current level of experience
- Interact with other highly skilled educators in the same developmental career arc as themselves
- Work on new initiatives in their schools over an extended period of time
- Apply their newly acquired knowledge to their practice immediately
- Engage in highly structured social interactions with staff of varying competencies and experience, and,
- Develop close working relationships with administration

Participants described these actions as the catalysts for their new understanding and appreciation of their organizations.

Additionally, not only did many participants feel more committed to their organizations, the resulting impact of this highly structured learning was a belief by most of the participants that they were now in a position where the knowledge they obtained had to be shared and applied in their daily practice. Not a single participant expressed that what they learned was something they would shelve or hide from their administrators, colleagues, students and families. The desire to share what was learned manifested itself in most cases by the participants re-committing to the organization in
which they worked to engage in formal and informal leadership within their respective schools.

For some participants, this feeling of connectedness seemed to come out of nowhere. As mentioned earlier, some had believed that the result of earning administrative certification would be that they would eventually have to leave their building or school district. Instead, this renewed connection meant that they no longer felt the need to leave their district and seek elsewhere the ability to impact a school building or school community on a larger scale. For many of the participants, earning the administrative certification and developing new relationships within their own buildings resulted in a sense of kinship with colleagues and administrators. They emerged from their programs believing that they were needed by both their colleagues and administrators in their current organizations and that the organizations now viewed them as valuable contributors to their health and success.

**Perceived Self-efficacy.** Although every participant in this study reported feeling confident in their teaching competency before entering into an administrative certification program, the resulting impact of having obtained the certification increased not only their confidence to share their expertise, but helped to develop a sense that what had been acquired as a result of the program was a broader understanding as to how their expertise could impact others beyond just their own students’ classroom experience and achievement. Essentially, participants felt that connecting the new learning from the program to the belief in their instructional competency led to a heightened sense of self-efficacy. This perceived self-efficacy, in turn, provided the newly certified administrators confidence in their abilities which motivated many of them to share their
skills with their colleagues and administrators. As such, their belief that they could be more effective as teachers resulted in the personal commitment to recommit to their current schools and take on the responsibility of developing the competencies of fellow teachers to support overall student achievement.

Bandura (1977, 1993, 1994, 2012) has described perceived self-efficacy as one’s belief in their own ability to produce desired effects, especially within the contexts in which they function. Specifically, Bandura (1997) states, “Perceived self-efficacy refers to belief in one’s agentive capabilities, that one can produce given levels of attainment” (1997, p. 382). It represents an intersection of one’s own belief system in the ability to successfully engage in meaningful, effective work and a sense that one belongs to and is a part of the system in which they are functioning. The linkage of the concepts of feeling more connected to the organization and more effective as teachers were unexpected and represent some of the most important learnings from this research.

The result of choosing to pursue administrative certification had a significant impact on the participants’ perception of their own abilities. The subsequent effect of these beliefs, for each of them, was the realization that their work held greater meaning than they had originally considered before becoming certified as administrators. Lilly shares an example of the impact of increased perceived self-efficacy on her practice:

Actually, I think it's [admin program] made me enjoy being in the classroom more now. I think it focused me into actually wanting to stay in the classroom and become the best teacher that I can be...It’s something that I have gotten better at.

Parker shared a similar point about how he felt more effective as an educator: “I felt like I was totally qualified to be there, more than I ever had before... I just feel like I am more appreciated as a teacher because they [administration] see what I can do... I'm enjoying it
more than I was before.” And finally, Alexis shares her beliefs about how the program developed an increase in her perceived self-efficacy:

I think I'm a much better problem solver now than I was when I was a beginning teacher with this new information. It has definitely-- made me feel really good about myself, really positive about myself, that I was offering information to people outside my classroom, that I was having more discussions. It kind of opened the doors to staff members that I might not normally talk to and I felt I had something to share.

Lilly, Parker, and Alexis shared similar sentiments that they were happy to be where they are in their careers and that as a result of the administrative program felt better about the skills they possessed as educators. Additionally, the idea that they could now have a greater impact on their peers as a result of this experience and new learning is also critical as it marks the realization by a number of the participants that their sphere of influence within the organization is increasing, which is something that will explored further Chapter 5.

The increase in perceived self-efficacy is one of the most profound impacts reported in this chapter. The confidence to experiment and challenge oneself, coupled with the realization and belief that you have become an integral part of the wider organization as a result of having obtained administrative certification may provide critical insights into how best to develop veteran teachers across their career arcs.

Summary

A synthesis of the findings in Chapter 4 is presented on the next page in Figure 2 - Findings Map. Outside of the new content knowledge that participants reported, Figure 2 illustrates the seven major findings reported in this chapter; and how each links to both the original research questions and the top three coded motivations for seeking
administrative certification. In addition to this, specific relationships between the findings are illustrated by directional arrows in the figure.

Figure 2 Map of Study Findings

The findings in this chapter as illustrated by Figure 2 represent the lived experiences of 15 individuals who had taught for at least five years and had earned their administrative certification within the past five years. The relationships between the findings are illustrated by directional arrows. Specifically, empathy for leadership is connected to the findings associated with participants’ relationships with administrators and the organization. The experiences that led to the development of empathy for leaders and their decision-making impacted the participants in ways that facilitated the development of more positive relationships with their administration and their organization. Additionally, working with colleagues in this new capacity helped to
develop an increase in perceived self-efficacy as participants took on roles similar to administrators and coaches. Likewise, as perceived self-efficacy increased, participants felt willing to expand their influence and support other colleagues. Finally, relationships with colleagues and the organization appeared to be symbiotic in that as many participants expressed that as one improved or was expanded upon, so did the other.

The synthesis of findings in Figure 2 suggests that the differentiated professional development opportunities that occur as a result of engaging in the activities associated with enrolling and completing an administrative certification program provide veteran educators with a profound and impactful professional learning experience. From the development of empathy for building leadership and their decision-making processes to the participants expanding their sphere of influence within the organization by establishing and expanding meaningful relationships across their organizations with colleagues and administrators, the experiences and learning associated with obtaining administrative certification was considered by the participants as some of the most rewarding learning experiences of their professional careers.
Chapter 5:

DISCUSSION

Purpose of the Study

Despite the voluminous pages of research that exist on teacher preparation and in-service professional development, many unanswered questions remain about how best to support teachers’ learning and career development. Regardless of where teachers fall in their career-arcs, whether it be at their point of entry into the field or after they have gained experience practicing for years, the current body of research on what and how educators should be developed and supported is incomplete. This study sought to investigate at a potential “third space” that rests somewhere between the current literature on how teachers are prepared for practice, and what school districts do to keep their novice and veteran staffs current and engaged in the challenging field of education.

For a variety of reasons, teachers are leaving the profession earlier and at alarming rates. Schools are wrestling with ways to keep veteran teachers engaged in their practice and connected to the organizations in which they work. While the reasons for that exodus are debated in yet another growing body of educational research, a fundamental question remains: What can be done to support our teachers throughout their careers better? What experiences and programming needs to be developed in order to help teaching professionals to feel supported, nurtured, and challenged throughout their career in ways that invigorate rather than frustrate them?

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate teachers’ experiences around obtaining administrative certification while remaining classroom teachers. This chapter includes a discussion of the major findings on how the type and structure of
learning involved in obtaining administrative certification seemingly orbits the findings on effective teacher preparation and in-service professional development but does not entirely occupy the same space. Moreover, included in this chapter is a discussion of how the reported impacts of acquiring administrative training may provide an important contribution to the evolving literature on alternate models for developing and retaining quality teachers. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the limitations of this study, recommendations for future research, and a final summary.

The following questions focused and framed this study:

- What do teachers who have administrative certification describe learning from their administrative certification programs?
- How do they report this learning impacting their teaching and professional lives?

This study drew upon a conceptual framework grounded in research in two distinct areas of teacher learning. First, the literature related to the structure and content of traditional teacher preparation programs helped articulate a baseline of skills that teachers are expected to have when they begin their professional careers. Secondly, the literature on in-service professional learning derived from district-led professional development activities helped to demonstrate the fundamental attributes of traditional in-service training models, the typical content associated with such training, and its effect on student achievement. Wrapped around this framework is Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) comprehensive investigation of teacher competencies within the instructional and professional responsibilities realm.

The conceptual framework for this study helps undergird an analysis of how teacher experiences obtaining administrative certification may contribute to the effective
initial and long-term development of teachers. By exploring the lived experiences of the participants in this study through a phenomenological lens, the findings illustrate how programming and experiences associated with the attainment of administrative certification by experienced teachers may help to: 1) promote new learning that either enhances existing or develops new professional competencies, 2) develop empathy for leadership and the decision-making process, 4) facilitate new enriching relationships with colleagues and administrators, 5) invite a renewed connectedness to the organization, and finally, 6) increase perceived self-efficacy as a professional. The resulting impact of these findings may influence both how we train and develop teachers to be successful with students and how teachers feel about their own sense of personal success and fulfillment within their careers.

**Summary of Key Findings**

While the motivation for entering an administrative certification program varied by individual, the resulting impact contributed significantly to the professional development and career satisfaction of the participants in this study. The analysis identified a variety of themes contributing to the major findings in this dissertation. Described in the following section are the key findings in which participants reported that learning to become an administrator: 1) provided meaningful and unique learning experiences as compared to their teacher preparation programs and in-service professional development, 2) helped participants develop empathy for their building leaders, 3) positively impacted their relationships with colleagues and administrators helping them to feel more connected to their organizations and the field of teaching, and finally, 4) increased their feelings of self-efficacy as educators.
Teacher preparation and in-service professional development could learn from administrative certification programs. This study identifies many of the key tenants (i.e., coursework and structures) of administrative certification programs that could inform revamping of teacher preparation and in-service professional development in order to potentially increase their effectiveness. The InTASC Model of Core Teaching Standards articulates 10 critical learning standards in which teachers should be able to at least demonstrate minimal competency upon entering the teaching profession. However, the participants in this study clearly articulated that they believed that they had little to no experience upon entering the field in areas of practice aligned to Standard 9 – Professional Learning and Ethical Practice, and Standard 10 -- Leadership and Collaboration:

**Standard #9:** Professional Learning and Ethical Practice. The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.

**Standard #10:** Leadership and Collaboration. The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth and to advance the profession. It was believed by many that these weaknesses were a result of not having had enough experience in the field of teaching from which to draw upon while preparing to become a teacher. Additionally, the participants reported minimal opportunity to develop these
skills during in-service professional development as these programs tended to focus on the expansion of pedagogical skills and content competency. However, by drawing upon their experiences in the field and engaging in the activities associated with earning an administrative certification, the participants reported developing competencies in the specific areas articulated in Standards 9 and 10.

Additionally, participants reported that the structure of the administrative certification programs provided for a meaningful and impactful learning experience. This is not surprising given the literature on effective professional development. The seven elements of successful professional development summarized by Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) are directly aligned to the structural strengths that were reported about the administrative certification program as follows:

1. Be content focused. Each administrative course was focused on specific learning goals with clearly articulated objectives.

2. Incorporate active learning strategies: Participants spoke about numerous group projects and opportunities to interact and present in front of, and with, peers.

3. Engage teachers in collaboration: There were numerous descriptions of group projects and required collaborations between teachers, administrators, professors, and the school community.

4. Use models and/or modeling: Participants spoke about the case-studies, scenarios, and models that were used during their program.

5. Provide coaching and expert support: There were multiple references to the expertise of the professors and the opportunities to work closely with administrators for coaching.
6. Include time for feedback and reflection: Course structures provided ample opportunity for feedback and reflection through assignments and practicum experiences.

7. Be sustained for a duration of time: Graduate courses were approximately 30-38 hours in length, per course. This exceeds the minimum threshold of 20 hours that Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) note was needed to show a measurable positive impact on teacher learning.

Finally, as participants reflected on their learning experiences, they articulated that the practicum and readings in their programs had been more impactful than they had anticipated they would be. In looking at the research in Grossman et al. (2009) on teacher preparation, the concepts of decomposition and approximation, not surprisingly, played essential roles in the learning of participants in their administrative certification programs. Each of the participants noted that the practicums in both their teacher and administrative preparation were some of the most valuable learning they had experienced.

The practicums provided the approximation to professional practice that Grossman et al. (2009) speak to in their research. However, the learning from such experiences was slightly different than is described by Grossman and colleagues. In learning to become a teacher, participants spoke about how the teacher practicum provided opportunities to be exposed to the world of the classroom and, to a lesser extent, the teaching profession as a whole (e.g., working with colleagues, professional dress, professional responsibility). On the other hand, administrative practicum participants described that the approximations of practice involved significantly more relational/bonding opportunities between themselves and their co-operating administrator. As these relationships grew, their sphere of
influence within the organization likewise increased. Rather than having influence on their own classrooms or perhaps some influence within their specific departments, participants expressed that they began to work more with and impact the lives of other teachers, which subsequently impacted the lives of other students and, in some case, the wider school community.

Participants also reported that the readings and “school-work” of the administrative programs were more meaningful and were far more engaging than they remembered the “school-work” of their early pre-teaching experiences. While this appreciation for the work could likely be attributed to maturity, the higher levels of autonomy and accountability around entering into this type of program at this point in their lives led many to report that they were more engaged and reflective in regards to the “school work” then they would have been in their younger lives. Many reported that the act of decomposing the practice of administrators was “challenging,” “fulfilling,” and “necessary.” This was in direct contrast to several participants who expressed that the decomposition of teaching through readings and assignments in their undergraduate work was generally described as “tedious,” “disconnected,” or “time-consuming.” Whether this difference was a function of maturity, experience, or both, there was an evident appreciation for the work associated with decomposing the theory and practice associated with the development of administrative competencies.

Ultimately, what participants noted as being critical to their learning associated with obtaining administrative certification was the fact that this kind of professional development at this point in their careers provided critical elements that need to be considered when programming for experienced teachers. Teachers who have developed
competencies as educators through experience may benefit from professional
development that not only contains the seven elements of successful TPD as summarized
by Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017), but that also provides additional
opportunities to learn. The learning may need to: be clearly articulated as to whom and
how they will be held accountable for completing work; be applicable to their role in
their organization; be aligned to their professional needs at that time in their careers; and
finally, allow for autonomy in selection of learning opportunities. These four A’s
(Accountability, Applicability, Alignment, and Autonomy) of TPD should be considered
when planning differentiated professional development for veteran teachers.

**Empathy in an organization can be a two-way street.** One of the most
interesting findings in this study was how participants expressed developing empathy for
their leaders while working closely with them and learning about their day-to-day lives.
When talking with participants about what they learned about teaching through an
administrative certification program, the theme of empathy for their administration was
something that many reported never expecting to occur as a result of their new learning.
Most of the participants were focused on new skills and experiences that they could bring
to their own or another organization as a result of learning to become an administrator.
Some participants expressed a desire to gain learning in areas that they felt were ready to
be developed more fully. However, the idea that one of the most profound lessons from
the experience would be recognizing the difficult circumstances that each of the building
leaders operated under was something that none of the participants had anticipated.

The development of empathy for administrators may have a significant impact on
the current landscape of teacher attrition. Viadero (2018) reported on an Education Week
Research Center’s (2018) poll of 500 K-12 teachers, where “Difficulties with Leadership” was, for the first time in the history of the poll, the number one reason teachers stated for leaving the teaching profession. This represents an upward shift from research conducted as recently as Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2016), where “Dissatisfied with the Administration” had peaked as the second highest reason for teacher dissatisfaction (tied with “Dissatisfied with Teaching as a Career”), coming just behind “Dissatisfied because of Assessments and Accountability Measures.” (See Appendix J - Teacher Reported Reasons for Exiting the Field for the complete listing of reasons) This means that for the past few years, difficulty with building leaders has represented one of the two top reasons teachers leave the profession. If learning to become an administrator helps develop empathy for one’s leader, this could possibly address one of the major sources of dissatisfaction in the profession. The impact of this new empathy could help stem rising attrition and go a long way in retaining skilled professionals to serve as mentors for novice teachers just entering the field.

**Connections can contribute to contentment.** As a result of going through the administrative certification process, participants overwhelmingly stated that they experienced significant, positive changes in their relationships with colleagues and their administrators. The majority reported feeling that new connections were forged with colleagues with whom they had not typically worked with before enrolling in their administrative certification programs. Both practicum experiences and some of the classroom assignments asked administrator candidates to engage in a variety of activities in the school that included: 1) Working with new staff, 2) Interviewing staff-members in other departments, and, 3) Working closely with administrators. Each of the participants
believed that the combination of these experiences and the connections that were forged as a result of these actions helped to reframe the roles each had within their classroom, school building, and organization. This reframing developed new relationships within their buildings allowing a number of the participants to support both peers and administrators as, almost, pseudo-administrators. These experiences contributed to a growing sphere of influence within many of the participants’ professional places of practice. Fairman and Mackenzie’s (2015) research describes how teachers incrementally develop and exhibit their skills as leaders within an organization. They found that, in general, as teachers gain experience and competencies increase, they may also begin to demonstrate leadership across a growing and widening number of stakeholders. Participants in this study expressed that positive feelings emerged as a result of these ever-increasing new roles within the building, which led some of them to express a feeling a renewal in their passion for teaching and the growing desire to serve their entire learning community.

Being recognized within the organization as someone who could support staff, solve problems, and be trusted by the administration to take on collaborative leadership roles, had a profound impact on most of the participants. For those who had considered leaving to pursue other opportunities, all but one chose to stay in their original setting and remain in a role as a classroom teacher. A few chose to take on leadership roles within their buildings by becoming department coordinators/managers. The impact of the learning and experiences attributed to the administrative certification program was a newfound contentment for who the participants were as educators and for the contributions they could make within their respective organizations. For many, this impact was
transformative. It renewed their sense of connection to both the original commitment they made to pursue a career as a teacher and to the building and organization that had supported them in their administrative practicums. The importance of the development of new relationships with administrators and colleagues and the connections those relationships forge cannot be overstated. It fostered a commitment to the organization, which Armstrong (2003) describes as being critical for productive employees and closely related to job satisfaction and lower labor turnover. The length of this renewed commitment remains unknown at this time as all of the participants had earned their administrative certifications within five years of the study, and most still work in the same districts as when they entered their administrative certification programs.

**Believing you are a better professional can make you one.** It is Bandura’s (2006) basic contention that, “Perceived self-efficacy is a judgement of capability to execute given types of performances.” (p. 309). This judgement that Bandura (1993) speaks about is derived from a combination of experiences, expectations, and self-evaluations that manifest themselves in a series of beliefs in one’s own ability to persevere or fail in any given task. The participants in this study enacted a series of experiences by entering into administrative certification programs that influenced their beliefs about themselves and their abilities to perform their role as teachers and eventually teacher leaders.

The concept of self-efficacy was not built into the original conceptual framework of this study. It certainly makes sense that engaging in effective and meaningful practice through a series of structured professional learning opportunities could result in feeling more competent; however, what emerged here was something more. The participants in
this study recognized that the administrative program was a catalyst that not only had
them believe they were more capable of doing the work they had been doing before, but
it also gave them the belief that they could experiment and engage in new professional
role activities that they previously hadn’t considered or felt capable of attempting. Many
reported feeling like they had become pseudo-administrators not merely as a result of
new skill sets, but from the increase in perceived self-efficacy around their competencies
as a whole.

**Limitations of the Study**

The study included fifteen participants with a minimum of five years of teaching
experience who had obtained their administrative certification within the previous five
years. Even though they teach in a variety of schools in Delaware County, PA, nine of
the participants who volunteered for the study were from the higher socio-economic, less
ethnically diverse schools within the county. Of the remaining six participants, only two
came from school districts with a free and/or reduced student population above 27% and
racial diversity that included a White population lower than 78%. Despite multiple
requests, I was unable to get any responses to my requests for participants from the four
county school districts with the highest levels of students on free and/or reduced lunch or
in racial diversity. These same four districts also have four of the lowest average number
of years teaching in the county. The fact that the staff is less veteran does not necessarily
equate to high teacher turnover; however, it does seem logical that this could be
connected based on existing research on teacher turnover in schools. If this is the case,
then the experiences of teachers earning administrative certification in districts similar to
these may have differing experiences, especially in the areas of connectedness and commitment as a result of the program.

Another factor to consider here as a limitation of this study is the racial homogeneity of the participants. Despite discussions with human resource personnel from each of the schools that had participants in this study, I was unable to identify any individuals of color who met the criteria of having taught for at least five years and having been certified as an administrator in the previous five years. This is not completely surprising, as fewer than 2% of the teachers in Delaware County are individuals of color. While this may explain the difficulty in recruiting participants of color for this study, the fact that the results reflect the experiences of White participants only needs to be considered when discussing potential applications of the research across all teacher contexts. It seems reasonable to conclude that the findings in this study are limited because the perspective of individuals of color working in a district where 98% of their colleagues are White is not represented in this research.

Every one of the participants represented in this research had attended a traditional administrator certification program offered through a brick-and-mortar college or university. Twelve of those institutions were local southeastern PA four-year colleges that offer both undergraduate and graduate programs in teacher preparation. The other three universities were in Texas, Maryland, and Massachusetts. It is important to note this because the experiences of the individuals and the positive feelings each expressed towards their programs appeared connected to the relationships each spoke about with their professors and colleagues. There are also non-traditional and cyber-based programs where teachers can obtain administrative certification. Therefore, it is essential to note
that the vast majority of the learning experiences that participants were reflecting upon in
this work were as a result of traditional classroom learning activities. Only a handful of
the participants remarked that there were cyber courses in their programs and when
questioned on this, it was reported that no more than two of what was typically ten-
twelve courses in any given program were taken virtually.

For those participants that had cyber courses, the reported that they didn’t feel the
same connections to the program or get the same level of learning from the structure as
compared to traditional courses. If this is the case, then perhaps the value placed on the
learning from the traditional programs may be mitigated in non-traditional or cyber
programs. Additionally, many cyber-based programs are geographically agnostic, which
is to say that they aren’t necessarily tied to one geographic area. Traditional programs
draw practitioners from local areas where they both work and study. The geographical
connection would allow for professors to draw on the local context of teachers in the
creation of assignments, case studies, and role plays. Not having this connection to the
local context could have an impact on the findings as it relates to the feelings expressed
by participants about how valuable the learning and classroom experiences were for
them.

Beyond the limitations of not having a complete representation of schools within
the county, the absence of participants of color, and drawing participants from only
traditional administrative certification programs from four-year brick-and-mortar
institutions; as one of fewer than fifty assistant superintendent/superintendents within the
area, my positionality bears some consideration here. Given my position, participants
may have been reticent to speak openly and honestly about colleagues, professional in-
service learning, experiences with administrators, and so on. To this, I can only offer that I focused intensely on both the lived experiences of the participants and my own positionality when asking probing questions in these areas. Utilizing my training as a counselor assisted me in engaging the individuals in a receptive and reflective manner.

Despite these limitations, the opportunity to engage in this research with both the support of my own school district’s administration and School Board has been some of the most rewarding work of my 26-year career.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

I started this research with the premise that the findings would suggest that the learning associated with earning administrative certification would result in the improvement of teaching competency, especially in the areas enumerated within the Instructional Domain of Sykes and Wilson’s (2015) framework. While teachers did suggest some connection between the learning in the administrative program and its influence on their teaching, the explicit connections between the program and how it changed or altered competencies were difficult to discern. When asked questions explicitly related to using the lens of an administrator conducting evaluations, only two participants, Brittney and Cara, connected an example of how their practice changed as a result of becoming administratively certified. When pressed for some possible examples of improved instructional competencies as a result of the new learning, nearly every participant found it difficult to articulate beyond their belief that they were “better” teachers as a result of the program. However, despite the lack of clear examples of improved upon teaching competencies, there were enough instances where a connection
between the learning and its impact on instructional pedagogy were suggested that I believe it would be valuable to investigate this fact further.

A second item to consider in terms of future is research is whether a link exists between the learning in administrative certification programs and student achievement. This could have a significant impact on the teaching field and professional development literature. This impact could be especially profound if it were possible to identify pre and post-competencies in pedagogical practices and if the resulting change in teaching competencies could be measurable in terms of a change in student achievement. While a link to student achievement in this research remains to seen, as it was not in the scope of this research, the fact that teachers felt an increase in perceived self-efficacy as a result of the program suggests that a link could exist. There is a large body of research on teacher self-efficacy that exists on how a teacher’s perceived self-efficacy can impact student achievement. Thus, while this study stops short of drawing any direct conclusions in this area, further research could determine if the findings in this study could connect to an increase in student achievement.

Finally, with attrition rates for teachers at all-time highs, further investigation seems warranted on how the development of empathy for building-leaders along with the connections principal[s] staff makes with their colleagues and organizations impact teachers’ decisions to leave an organization or the profession. With increased understanding of building leader decision-making and insights as to why many of those decisions are being made the way they are, it may be possible that some of the frustration teachers are feeling with their administration could be reduced. The result of this may be a decrease in the dissatisfaction that teachers at different points in their career-arcs have
with their jobs. Investigating this link may help to define factors that could result in a reduction of teacher attrition.

**Final Remarks and New Developments**

As a result of this study, the Proposed Developmental Model of Teacher Proficiency in Chapter 2, Figure 1 needed to be expanded and revised in order to accommodate the learning derived from this research. While the ordering of the developmental stages remain the same (i.e., Novice, Practicing, Professionalized, and Realized), the descriptions of each stage have evolved and require additional space to adequately represent the findings. It is also important to recognize that in the earlier proposed model in Chapter 2, the term “administrative competencies” was used to describe the potential key takeaways embedded within the “Professionalized Teacher” stage of the model. As a result of the research here, it was found that the experience of learning administrative competencies was not what participants explicitly stated as being critical to their learning and experiences. Figure 3 represents a Revised Developmental Model of Teacher Proficiency:

![Diagram of Revised Developmental Model of Teacher Proficiency](image_url)

**Figure 3** Revised Developmental Model of Teacher Proficiency
In the Novice phase of development, beginning teachers enter their professional practice with baseline competencies that were developed as a result of teacher preparation programs and fieldwork. Their level of experience is minimal and is based mostly on approximations of practice. Teachers in this phase have a sphere of influence that could be best characterized as limited and focused mainly on learning their practice and developing an understanding of classroom and building routines (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012). Moving forward in their career arcs, teachers enter the Practicing phase, where they gain early classroom experience and receive district led professional development that allows the novice teacher to practice new skills and expand teaching competencies. It is at this stage where Podolsky and Kini (2016) note that experience helps to drive the development of teaching competencies. Additionally, as teachers experiment and benefit from a variety of experiences, their spheres of influence increase and begin to allow for more coaching and collaboration with content and/or departmental colleagues (Fairman & Mackenzie 2012).

In the Practicing phase, teachers move into the Professionalized stage where they engage in new learning that expands Professional Role competencies, promotes empathy for leadership, fosters meaningful relationships with colleagues & administrators, and facilitates connectedness to the organization and increases perceived self-efficacy. At this point in their career arc, a teacher’s sphere of influence begins to widen greatly. Engaging in learning, such as the type of experiences associated with obtaining administrative certification, allows professionalized teachers to take on the role of pseudo-administrators, increasing the likelihood of impacting colleagues outside of their department and across the organization.
Finally, Realized teachers blend career experiences with differentiated professional learning throughout their careers to create a fully realized teacher who can serve as a teacher-leader and role model. At this point in their career arcs, teachers could be able to draw upon teacher preparation, traditional district/building level professional development, professional experience, and learning experiences that draw upon the four A’s (Accountability, Applicability, Alignment, and Autonomy) in order to become fully realized educators with highly developed competencies across all of the domains in Sykes and Wilson (2015).

In closing, this has been an amazing experience to engage in this research. The opportunity to engage members of the teaching community in Delaware County, PA throughout this research has provided me a unique lens into the experiences of individuals in settings beyond my district. Knowing my context has always been something I valued as a leader. However, through this process and seeing how other local districts operate in regards to developing teaching competency through professional learning, my eyes have been opened far beyond what I expected. When I began this research, I was hoping to identify a “third space” between the current practices of teacher preparation and in-service professional development. I had hoped that by exploring the structure and learning associated with administrative certification programs, I could not only contribute to the research that has been written in these two areas but also inform the practices around professional development within the actual field, thereby influencing the decisions that are being currently utilized around professional in-service learning within my own and neighboring districts. I am excited to state that this goal is being realized.
As a result of this research, our school district has formed a partnership with Neumann University to design a cohort style, in district, professional learning program focused on the core learning and principles that participants in this survey relayed as being most valuable to them. Neumann University is planning in 2020-2021 to offer an abbreviated administrative certification program for Master’s level teachers on our campus at a significant cost reduction to traditional programs. In addition to this, as a result of this study, our district is considering funding 100% of the first cohort so that we can collect additional data in some of the areas mentioned above in the, “Recommendations for Future Research” portion of Chapter 5.

The program will consist of coursework in the following areas:

- EDU XXX School Policy and Law
- EDU XXX The Principalship & Community
- EDU XXX Fiscal and Facility Management
- EDU XXX Administration and Staff Development / Organizational Behavior
- EDU XXX Curriculum Design, Evaluation, & Assessment
- EDU XXX Principal Certification Internship

This program is a fantastic opportunity and one that expands the potential around that “third space” being realized. Consider that, as I mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, many districts do not fully cover the costs of the administrative certification programs, ours included. My experience in this area has led me to conclude that from the School Board’s point of view, the costs of the program do not outweigh the benefits the learning provides to the teacher. While conducting the research for this study, I spoke with 23 school districts’ human resources departments and asked them how many teacher in-
service professional development days they had during the school year. Districts reported that on average, the allocated seven days out of the entire school year for PD. This means that seven school days a year, most teachers who are at different points in their career-arcs are asked to engage in district professional development with their peers. During those seven days, students are home, and families in the communities need to arrange for care for their children. This care, in many cases, represents a considerable financial hardship for families and results in students missing nearly 4% of school on average during 182-day school year.

During the seven school days that teachers are engaged in professional development activities; they are being paid their full salaries. In our district alone, 4% of the teaching payroll represents approximately 1.7 million dollars. This essentially translates to the school district paying teachers 1.7 million dollars a year to be present in school for professional development. This is the same PD, which according to the participants represented in this study, was considered to be only marginally or sporadically productive in developing teaching competencies. When you consider that students miss 4% of the school year and districts literally pay millions of dollars for teachers to engage in by many measures, marginal learning, there is clearly room for a paradigm shift. Perhaps this research can start that conversation.

Ultimately, what I take away from this research is that the differentiated learning that participants ascribed as being most impactful as a result of the administrative certification program was the altered dynamics and relationships each had with their colleagues, administrators, and the organizations in which they worked. Becoming a principaled teacher redefined their role within the building and redefined what it meant to
be a professional teacher. This research may help to provide a similar experience for other educators. I believe that a third space that lies between teacher preparation and traditional TPD may exist where the four A’s (Accountability, Applicability, Alignment, and Autonomy) of professional development can be blended with an increase in perceived self-efficacy that comes as a result of engaging in the activities associated with earning administrative certification. If this is the case, then we may need to look to this kind of model in the future in the hopes that it may provide new insights into how to best prepare educators for a lasting, fulfilling and impactful career in teaching.
## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

**Sykes and Wilson (2015) Domains of Teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain I: Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparing and Planning for High Quality Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing on students’ cultural, family, intellectual, and personal experiences and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting community participation as opportunity to explore core values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting long-and short-range learning goals and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastering lesson content for instruction purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting and adapting resources for use in instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting/designing instructional tasks, activity structures, and formats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending to Relational Aspects of Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing caring and respectful relationships with individual students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending to and promoting student social and emotional needs and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building positive classroom climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing and Maintaining the Social and Academic Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing organizational routines, norms, strategies, and procedures to support a learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing the physical and material environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing instructional groupings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using time productively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending to instructional purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enacting instructional tasks and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging students with subject matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestrating productive discourses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing strategy instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing and responding to student learning during instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in instructional Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving instructional routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in deliberate practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(continued)

Domain II: Professional Role Responsibilities

Collaborating with Other Professionals
  Using professional networks
  Communicating professionally, both in person and via technology
  Collaborating in professional learning communities and on teams
  Exercising leadership, both formally and informally

Working with Families and Communities
  Fostering two-way, respectful communication with parents and guardians
  Using family- and community-related information as a resource for learning

Fulfilling Ethical Responsibilities
  Enacting the basic moral principles and duties associated with the role of teacher and exercising diligence and prudence in observing these duties
  Responding to ethical dilemmas with sound reasoning and actions
  Detecting and correcting biases of various kinds via reflection and feedback
  Advocating appropriately for students

Meeting Legal Responsibilities
  Complying with all relevant laws and regulations
  Creating and maintaining accurate records of student progress and related matters
Appendix B

CAEP: Standard 1: Content and Pedagogical Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Candidates demonstrate an understanding of the 10 InTASC standards at the appropriate progression level(s) in the following categories: the learner and learning; content knowledge; instructional practice; and professional responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Providers ensure that candidates use research and evidence to develop an understanding of the teaching profession and use both to measure their P-12 students’ progress and their own professional practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Providers ensure that candidates apply content and pedagogical knowledge as reflected in outcome assessments in response to standards of Specialized Professional Associations (SPA), the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), states, or other accrediting bodies (e.g., National Association of Schools of Music – NASM).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Providers ensure that candidates demonstrate skills and commitment that afford all P-12 students access to rigorous college- and career-ready standards (e.g., Next Generation Science Standards, National Career Readiness Certificate, Common Core State Standards).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Providers ensure that candidates model and apply technology standards as they design, implement and assess learning experiences to engage students and improve learning; and enrich professional practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

The 10 InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard #1</strong> Learner Development - The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard #2</strong> Learning Differences - The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard #3</strong> Learning Environments - The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard #4</strong> Content Knowledge - The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard #5</strong> Application of Content - The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard #6</strong> Assessment - The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher’s and learner’s decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard #7</strong> Planning for Instruction - The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard #8</th>
<th>Instructional Strategies - The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard #9</td>
<td>Professional Learning and Ethical Practice - The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard #10</td>
<td>Leadership and Collaboration - The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix D

A Mapping of 10 InTASC Core Teaching Standards onto the Sykes and Wilson (2015) Domains of Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards</th>
<th>Sykes and Wilson (2015) Domains of Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning and Learner: Standard #1</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner Development</td>
<td>Preparing and Planning for High Quality Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Learner and Learning: Standard #2</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Difference</td>
<td>Attending to Relational Aspects of Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Learner and Learning: Standard #3</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Environments</td>
<td>Establishing and Maintaining the Social and Academic Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Knowledge: Standard #4</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Knowledge</td>
<td>Preparing and Planning for High Quality Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishing and Maintaining the Social and Academic Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interactive Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Knowledge: Standard #5</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of Content</td>
<td>Preparing and Planning for High Quality Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interactive Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaging Instructional Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Knowledge: Standard #6</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Preparing and Planning for High Quality Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interactive Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Knowledge: Standard #7</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for Instruction</td>
<td>Preparing and Planning for High Quality Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attending to the Relational Aspects of Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishing and Maintaining the Social and Academic Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaging in Instructional Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards</td>
<td>Sykes and Wilson (2015) Domains of Teaching</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Knowledge: Standard #8</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Strategies</td>
<td>Preparing and Planning for High Quality Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Responsibility: Standard #9</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Learning and</td>
<td>Engaging in Instructional Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Practice</td>
<td>Professional Role Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Responsibility: Standard #10</td>
<td>Collaborating with Other Professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and Collaboration</td>
<td>Exercising Leadership, both formally and informally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborating with Other Professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fulfilling Ethical Responsibilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Title IX Section 901.34 Professional Development Definition

(34) PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT—The term ‘professional development’ —

(A) includes activities that —

(i) improve and increase teachers' knowledge of the academic subjects the teachers teach, and enable teachers to become highly qualified;

(ii) are an integral part of broad schoolwide and districtwide educational improvement plans;

(iii) give teachers, principals, and administrators the knowledge and skills to provide students with the opportunity to meet challenging State academic content standards and student academic achievement standards;

(iv) improve classroom management skills;

(v)(I) are high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher's performance in the classroom; and

(II) are not 1-day or short-term workshops or conferences;

(vi) support the recruiting, hiring, and training of highly qualified teachers, including teachers who became highly qualified through State and local alternative routes to certification;

(vii) advance teacher understanding of effective instructional strategies that are —

(I) based on scientifically based research (except that this subclause shall not apply to activities carried out under part D of title II); and
(II) strategies for improving student academic achievement or
substantially increasing the knowledge and teaching skills of teachers; and
(viii) are aligned with and directly related to —
(I) State academic content standards, student academic achievement
standards, and assessments; and
(II) the curricula and programs tied to the standards described in subclause
(I) except that this subclause shall not apply to activities described in
clauses (ii) and (iii) of section 2123(3)(B);
(ix) are developed with extensive participation of teachers, principals,
parents, and administrators of schools to be served under this Act;
(x) are designed to give teachers of limited English proficient children,
and other teachers and instructional staff, the knowledge and skills to
provide instruction and appropriate language and academic support
services to those children, including the appropriate use of curricula and
assessments;
(xi) to the extent appropriate, provide training for teachers and principals
in the use of technology so that technology and technology applications
are effectively used in the classroom to improve teaching and learning in
the curricula and core academic subjects in which the teachers teach;
(xii) as a whole, are regularly evaluated for their impact on increased
teacher effectiveness and improved student academic achievement, with
the findings of the evaluations used to improve the quality of professional
development;
(xiii) provide instruction in methods of teaching children with special needs;

(xiv) include instruction in the use of data and assessments to inform and instruct classroom practice; and

(xv) include instruction in ways that teachers, principals, pupil services personnel, and school administrators may work more effectively with parents; and

(B) may include activities that —

(i) involve the forming of partnerships with institutions of higher education to establish school-based teacher training programs that provide prospective teachers and beginning teachers with an opportunity to work under the guidance of experienced teachers and college faculty;

(ii) create programs to enable paraprofessionals (assisting teachers employed by a local educational agency receiving assistance under part A of title I) to obtain the education necessary for those paraprofessionals to become certified and licensed teachers; and

(iii) provide follow-up training to teachers who have participated in activities described in subparagraph (A) or another clause of this subparagraph that are designed to ensure that the knowledge and skills learned by the teachers are implemented in the classroom.
Appendix F

Participant Recruitment Letter

September 2018

Dear Fellow Educator,

My name is Jeffrey J. Zweiback, and I am a doctoral candidate as the University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study of K-12 educators because you are a member of a very special group – educators who currently hold an administrative license but continue to practice as classroom teachers. I am studying what impact, if any, the development of administrative competencies has on classroom teacher competency.

I became interested in this topic when after 6 years as a classroom teacher, I entered into an administrative program and began to see how it impacted my classroom teaching. Additionally, after years of professional development throughout my career, I couldn’t help but feel that some of the most valuable learning I ever gained was in the preparation I had to become an administrator.

Should you decide to help me, your participation will include an approximately 1-hour interview with the potential for a single follow-up focus group lasting no more than 1 hour. These will be scheduled at a time and place of your convenience. Your responses and data will be confidential and stored as electronic files that are encrypted/password protected. All information will be kept in confidence. In addition, you may request to withdraw from this study at any time without consequence. Self-selected pseudonyms will be used to report study findings.

This study will be shared with my dissertation committee and other appropriate members of the University of Pennsylvania community. The dissertation that results from this work will be published in electronic and hard copy and housed in the Franklin Library online and on the University of Pennsylvania campus.

Although there is no monetary benefit to you by participating in this study, your participation may help us develop a better understanding of how current models of teacher preparation and in-service professional development could be altered to include some of the key findings from this study. Additionally, this is a chance for you to share your feelings about the current types of learning experiences that are available to you in your setting and what you believe the impact of those are on your practice. In the future, this may help educators to create a better set of learning experiences both prior to classroom service and throughout one’s career as an educator.
Should you decide to be a participant in this study, please email or call me to confirm your interest at your earliest convenience. Additionally, I ask that you take a short screening survey to confirm your eligibility for this study: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HTHC2WS

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (610) 656-4458 or e-mail at jzwei@gse.upenn.edu. You may also contact my committee chairperson, Dr. Leslie Nabors Oláh, Ed. D at leslieno@gse.upenn.edu. Any questions about your rights as a research subject may be directed to Amanda O’Hara at (215) 898-2881 or at ohamanda@upenn.edu.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey J. Zweiback
Appendix G

Short Recruitment Questionnaire

The purpose of this short survey is to gather general information to determine if individuals meet the eligibility requirements to participate. This survey will be conducted on SurveyMonkey.

1. How long have you been practicing as a certified teacher?
2. How long have you been working in your current school and/or district?
3. How would you describe your school setting?
   a. Public: Traditional
   b. Public: Charter (Brick & Mortar Building)
   c. Public: Charter Cyberschool
   d. Private
4. What is your current position in the school in which you work?
5. What school or program did you go to earn your administrative certification?
6. When did you complete your administrative certification program?
Appendix H

Interview Protocol and Question Mapping

In attempting to answer the following research questions, I began with a 14-question protocol.

- What do teachers who have administrative certification describe learning from these programs?
- How do they report this learning impacting their teaching and professional lives?

I did a single follow-up focus group. Focus group questions were designed as a result of the themes identified in the initial individual interviews.

*Each question is linked in a small table at the end of this section to map onto the research questions.*

Introduction

*Thanks so much for meeting with me today. As I mentioned before, the purpose is to learn more about the experiences that teachers have had going through administrative certification. This conversation will take approximately one hour, and, with your permission, I would like to audio record it. Please note that I will not refer to you by name during the interview to maintain your confidentiality. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

Background

1) Tell me a little of the history about how you chose to become a teacher. What was your motivation to become a teacher?

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development
2) Could you highlight some of the educational experiences you have had that went into making you who you are as an educator today? (Probe for examples and note if any specifics come up around administrative learning and if they link to questions #10, and #11.)

3) What do you remember about your teacher preparation program and how it prepared you for taking over your first classroom? (Probe for specifics about the kind of learning and how that transferred (or didn’t) to the classroom.)

4) Can you share with me some of the specific professional development topics or experiences you have had as a teacher?
   a. Did any of the PD topics or experiences have any impact on your teaching practice? If so, how? (Probe for what the teacher learned and how that was applied in their professional life.)

**Administrative Certification**

5) What led to your decision to pursue administrative certification?
   a. Could you tell me a little more about what went into the decision to pursue administrative certification? (Probe for what the teacher wanted to learn or learn how to do.)
   b. Follow-up: Was there any person or event that led you to become interested in pursuing administrative certification?

6) What would you say was the biggest motivator for pursuing the administrative certification (Financial, leadership, etc.)?

7) In what ways, if any, was your experience in the administrative program different than in your teacher preparation program?
a. (Follow-up): Can you be specific about some of the differences?

b. What coursework or experience impacted you as a learner?

**Teaching and Professional Lives**

8) What led you to continue serving as a classroom teacher rather than as an administrator after earning your administrative certification?

9) What was it like to return to the classroom after getting your administrative certificate? (Probe on the learning that took place and how it might have impacted any change in teaching practice.)

10) Has the learning that you gained from the administrative program changed your relationship with colleagues? If so, tell me how, give me some examples, if you can. (Probe on learning that took place and how that might have impacted any change in the relationship(s).)

11) Could you offer me a sense of how administrative training has changed your view, if at all, about teaching and your role in the profession? (Probe on learning that took place and how that might have impacted any change in perspective)

12) What are your professional plans going forward?

13) Knowing what you know now, would you pursue administrative certification again? Why, or why not? (Probe to find out if this is something they would recommend and why.)

14) What have I missed in my questions that you would like me to know regarding your experiences while studying to become an administrator?
Closing, and reference to potential focus group follow-up:

Thank you so much for the time you have spent with me today. After I have had some time to review this interview, would you consider allowing me to circle back and ask you a few follow-up questions to clarify anything that I may have missed? Additionally, once I complete this first round of interviews, I will be looking to convene a focus group to dive deeper into some of the themes I am able to identify from all of the participants.

Would you be interested in that if I should need you further?

### Question Mapping to Research Links

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>How do Questions Pertain to Research?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Tell me a little of the history of how you chose to become a teacher?</td>
<td>Relational, but also look for cues for follow-up related to educational experiences that speak to PD, teacher training &amp; admin training?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Could you highlight some of the educational experiences you have had that went into making you who you are as an educators today?</td>
<td>Look at link to TPP and TPD research connection (Strength and Weaknesses) part of conclusions based on Theoretical Framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) What do you remember about your teacher preparation program and how it prepared you for taking over your first classroom?</td>
<td>Look at link to TPP research connection (Strength and Weaknesses) part of conclusions based on Theoretical Framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Can you share with me some of the specific professional development topics or experiences you have had as a teacher?</td>
<td>This maps back to theoretical framework and trying to identify explicitly what was learned from TPD as opposed to admin training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) What led to your decision to pursue administrative certification? Could you tell me a little about what went into the decision to pursue administrative certification?</td>
<td>Gain continued understanding of choice to pursue administrative certification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
<td>How do Questions Pertain to Research?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) What would you say was the biggest motivator for pursuing the administrative certification (Financial, leadership, etc.)?</td>
<td>Interest in understanding motivation. for pursuit of administrative certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) In what ways, if any, was your experience in the administrative program different than in your teacher preparation program?</td>
<td>Seek to identify difference in admin program as related to TPP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) What led you to continue serving as a classroom teacher rather than as an administrator after earning your administrative certification?</td>
<td>Relates to Shuttle research to identify reasons for remaining in teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) What was it like to return to the classroom after getting your administrative certificate?</td>
<td>Beginning the real drill to research questions. First glimpse of what changes and if there may be an impact to teaching competency. This ties to question 2 and role of teacher fit within the school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Has the learning that you gained from the administrative program changed your relationship with your colleagues...Tell me how, give me some examples, if you can.</td>
<td>Direct link to Question 1 and another explicit request for a connection of admin learning to S&amp;W competencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Could you offer me a sense of how administrative training has changed your view, if at all, about teaching and your role in the profession?</td>
<td>Look closely at professional goals and impact on professional life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) What are your professional plans going forward?</td>
<td>Gauge the level of belief in the value and quality of this type of professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) Knowing what you know now, would you pursue administrative certification again? Why/why not?</td>
<td>Closing opportunity for participant to connect learning in admin program to competency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) What have I missed in my questions that you would like me to know regarding your experiences while studying to become an administrator?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix I

## Thematic Codes from Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Expanded</th>
<th>Code Explained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(BAD)</td>
<td>Being or Becoming an Administrator</td>
<td>Evidence of steps or processes related to becoming an administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ISL)</td>
<td>Impacted Student Learning</td>
<td>Reported activity or learning that have a direct impact on student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ID:ARA)</td>
<td>Instructional Domain: Attending to Relational Aspects of Instruction</td>
<td>S&amp;W Domain I (Building positive classroom climate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ID:INST)</td>
<td>Instructional Domain: Engaging in Instructional Improvement</td>
<td>S&amp;W Domain I (Engaging in deliberate practice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ID:IT/ENG)</td>
<td>Instructional Domain: Interactive Teaching – Engaging Students</td>
<td>S&amp;W Domain I (Engaging students with subject matter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ID:IT/PURP)</td>
<td>Instructional Domain: Interactive Teaching - Purpose</td>
<td>S&amp;W Domain I (Attending to instructional purposes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ID:IT/RES)</td>
<td>Instructional Domain: Interactive Teaching – Student Learning</td>
<td>S&amp;W Domain I (Assessing and responding to student learning during instruction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(META)</td>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>A personal interrogation of instructional practice that has teacher in the moment stepping outside of themselves in the classroom to question the efficacy of their practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(NEWREL:A)</td>
<td>New relationships with administrators</td>
<td>Specific articulation by participants where they note a new type of relationship with administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(NEWREL:C)</td>
<td>New relationships with colleagues</td>
<td>Specific articulation by participants where they note a new type of relationship with colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(PIM)</td>
<td>Personal Impact</td>
<td>Reporting of skills and experiences that have impacted them personally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Code Expanded</td>
<td>Code Explained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(PrefCore)</td>
<td>Preferred Coursework</td>
<td>Explicit references to coursework in the administrative prep program that participants describe as having an impact on them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(PRR: ETH)</td>
<td>Professional Role Responsibility Domain:</td>
<td>S&amp;W Domain II (Responding to ethical dilemmas with sound reasoning and actions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fulfilling Ethical Responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(PRR: EXL)</td>
<td>Professional Role Responsibility Domain:</td>
<td>S&amp;W Domain II (Exercising leadership, both formally and informally)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborating with Other Professionals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(PRR: FAM)</td>
<td>Professional Role Responsibility Domain:</td>
<td>S&amp;W Domain II (Using family- and community-related information as a resource for learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working with Families and Communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(PRR: LEG)</td>
<td>Professional Role Responsibility Domain:</td>
<td>S&amp;W Domain II (Complying with all relevant laws and regulations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting Legal Responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(TPD:IMP)</td>
<td>Professional Development: Impactful</td>
<td>Reporting of learning associated with in-service professional development that is impactful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(TPD:NI)</td>
<td>Professional Development: Not Impactful</td>
<td>Reporting of ineffective content or activities that had little to no discernible impact on the teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix J

### Teacher Reported Reasons for Exiting the Field

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for Exit</th>
<th>Survey Questions in Each Category</th>
<th>% Rated Very or Extremely Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction (55%)</td>
<td>Dissatisfied because of assessments and accountability measures</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissatisfied because not enough support to prepare students for assessment</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissatisfied with compensation tied to student performance</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dissatisfied with the administration</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>21%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too many intrusions on teaching time</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discipline issues were an issue at school</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not enough autonomy in the classroom</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissatisfied with lack of influence over school policies and practices</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissatisfied with teaching as a career</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not enough opportunities for leadership or professional advancement</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissatisfied with job description or assignment</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissatisfied with large class sizes</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissatisfied with working conditions (facilities, classroom resources, school safety)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES


Denzin, N. K. (2009). The elephant in the living room: Or extending the conversation about the politics of evidence. *Qualitative Research, 9*(2), 139-160.


Kitzinger, J. (1994). The methodology of focus groups: the importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health & Illness, 16*(1), 103-121.


https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/

